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국제학석사 학위논문

**The Ambiguity of the Soft Power Aspect in  
Chinese Foreign Aid:  
A Study of China's Aid toward Africa**

중국 원조에서의 ‘소프트파워’ 전략의 모호성:  
중국의 대 아프리카 원조

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# **Abstract**

## **The Ambiguity of the Soft Power Aspect in Chinese Foreign Aid: A Study of China's Aid toward Africa**

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The African region is a geopolitically complex area when it comes to the competition of major donor countries. As 'soft power' strategy gains importance these days, countries try to utilize foreign aid as a part of their soft power strategy, to enhance their image and strengthen a solid platform for mutual cooperation. China is one of the major countries increasing its presence in Africa and engaging in deeper cooperation with African countries under the purpose of enhancing its soft power. However, the concept of soft power is relatively superficial, ambiguous, and often overused and misused by the government and politicians as a political rhetoric. A closer look at China's foreign aid leads us to question whether it was actually 'soft power' that it wanted to target and to what extent it can be classified as soft power, as opposed to hard power.

In this paper, I argue that China is utilizing a mixture of hard and soft power of

aid, unlike traditional donors who try to conceal or lessen hard power elements of aid as much as possible. This would lead to an uncertain and incomplete gain for China in terms of gaining soft power due to soft power's inherent ambiguity and thus lead to China's exertion of hard power even with its intention to increase soft power. This paper will further look at the benefits and challenges for China's aid from adopting a hybrid strategy towards aid and see how the recipients perceive such an ambiguous approach.

**Keywords: soft power, China's aid, foreign aid, Africa, hard power, ODA**

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## **I. Introduction**

### **1. Research Background**

The African region is a geopolitically complex area when it comes to the competition of major donor countries. Among those donor countries, China tries to attract as many allies in Africa as possible, considering Africa's potential for development opportunities and China's efforts to improve its reputation as a potential world leader. Moreover, China tries to enhance its soft power within the region by convincing countries to accept the 'One China Policy' and by persuading that their growth would not be a threat to neighboring countries. Improving soft power is particularly crucial for a country like China, whose economic power has currently been recognized by the world to a certain level, but not so much for its reputation and attractiveness, which consist the 'soft power' spectrum.

Meanwhile, the concept of soft power is relatively superficial and often overused by the government and politicians as a political rhetoric when compared to hard power. A closer look at China's foreign aid leads us to question whether it was actually 'soft power' that it wanted to target and to what extent it can be classified as soft power, rather than hard power. When a donor country tries to approach aid with a hard power focus, it easily brings backlash or opposition from the recipient's side, which is the reason why most donors approach aid with a softer intention. However, China does not seem to respond sensitively to these oppositions, but rather pushes through its aid policies under its alternative framework, 'south-south cooperation'. By doing so, it is



free from any constraints that Western donors face from their membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).

Also, it is worth looking at the different focuses of 'soft power' that have been used by China in carrying out foreign aid, while comparing the connotation of this power to that of the donors of the OECD-DAC. It seems that the main purpose of the mainstream OECD-DAC donors for providing aid is to increase its soft power toward the recipient countries, as well as to the rest of the world in order to show how much it is contributing to the overall well-being of the global society. However, China's case is quite different from such approach, utilizing both hard and soft power in terms of aid delivery. Thus, this paper questions the ambiguity of the soft power strategy in foreign aid carried out to African countries by China and argues that its 'softer' intentions might rather result in enhancing its hard power.

## **2. Research Question**

Why does China show both hard and soft power aspects in aid toward African countries, unlike the traditional OECD-DAC donors who emphasize the softer aspect of aid and try to conceal the hard power elements?

## **3. Purpose of the Study**

The first purpose of this study is to conceptualize the concept 'soft power'.

Although Joseph Nye pointed out the different elements of soft power and its difference to the concept of hard power<sup>1</sup>, it still has its limitations when trying to apply the concept to other fields of studies. This is because Nye only intended to use the term to explain the situation of the United States back then rather than as a general theoretical framework of social studies. Geun Lee also mentions in his paper that “Nye only pointed out that there is a distinction between hard power and soft power and did not suggest any meaningful theoretical frameworks...it has been difficult to find any soft power discourses or policies of a country that go further than mere emphasis on public diplomacy.”<sup>2</sup> Nye’s intention as such, explains the lack of concreteness of the term ‘soft power’ in order to be applied to other countries or various fields of social science.

Given that there are no concrete soft power indicators that are internationally agreed upon, it is with no doubt that any microeconomic or indexical approach of research could be hard to conduct at this moment. However, this paper tries to partially overcome this limit by providing a framework of soft power in aid and hopes to provide a more concrete picture of how the term soft power can be utilized to explain aid or potentially, other political decisions in the future. From this, I hope that more future scholars who strive to analyze aid through the lens of soft power could get a

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<sup>1</sup> Nye, Joseph. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Geun. “A Theory of Soft Power and Korea’s Soft Power Strategy”. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*. Vol. 21, No.2, June 2009, 207pg.

certain idea of conceptualizing the term.

By using such framework, this paper tries to explore the soft power strategies of China, especially on its foreign aid to African countries. Because aid is distributed in order to support the national interest in the end, each country will show country-specific and strategic aid patterns when it comes to enhancing soft power. This paper will look into the different stages and themes of aid distribution as well as different countries that China gives aid to, and analyzes the intention of China to promote its soft power in the recipient countries. China's approach to aid will be then compared to that of OECD-DAC countries to explore why China is comparatively facing fewer limits to outwardly reveal its hard power intentions in aid. It also touches upon the ambiguous usage and application of the term 'soft power' used by China in foreign aid, comparing it with 'hard power'.

Lastly, this paper aims to depart from the soft power discourse which focuses mostly on the spread of culture or pop culture. Existing literature on soft power is too much focused on cultural aspects of one country such as sports, arts and media. However, soft power discussion in regards to aid or development also has a lot to contribute to the academia by providing a fresh perspective. It is worth noting that aid could be a potential method for enhancing soft power when planned and utilized in the right way.

In the long term, this analysis would eventually help South Korea to systematically approach its own Official Development Assistance (ODA) not only for economic benefits, but also as a valuable method of enhancing its image to its recipient

countries. As a country that has experienced a rapid transition from a recipient to a donor status, investigating the experiences of China could provide a good lesson for South Korea's future policy-makers, especially in terms of enhancing a country's image through foreign aid.

## II. Literature Review

Because the start of the concept, ‘soft power’ was when Harvard professor Joseph Nye coined the term in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*<sup>3</sup>, the history of the term is not long. Only a faint discourse on soft power has been made, and the term usually was used as a supplement or an alternative to hard power, a concept that gained more spotlight in the academia. Since research on soft power came into the academic limelight fairly recently, not many efforts was seen linking ‘soft power’ with ‘foreign aid’.

A majority of academic pieces, such as Hongyi Lai and Yiyi Lu’s *China’s Soft Power and International Relations*<sup>4</sup>, relate soft power with a country’s cultural aspect such as movies, TV shows, pop songs, tourism and food, rather than foreign aid or even foreign policies. Davies et al.<sup>5</sup> also shows a limited analysis of Chinese soft power toward Africa where only cultural linkages and culture exchanges are taken into consideration. A piece by Wolf et al. connects Chinese soft power with its Confucius Institute (CI) thus showing the lack of linkage with soft power with fields other than

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<sup>3</sup> Nye, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Lai and Lu. *China’s Soft Power and International Relations: China Policy Series*. Routledge, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Davies et al. “Changing China, Changing Africa: Future Contours of an Emerging Relationship”, *Asian Economic Policy Review* (2014) 9, p.186

Chinese language, literature, films and education.<sup>6</sup> As such, numerous accounts document soft power in light of cultural cooperation, rather than other aspects that could be closely related to the aid industry, even without the cultural part playing a role.

In fact, for those who have in deed made a connection between the two concepts, it was mostly based on a vague generalization that the more two countries cooperate in a donor-recipient relationship, the more positive the image of the donor country will likely be. In his paper “Beyond Aid Effectiveness?: Private and Public Partnerships in South Korea’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) Strategy as Soft Power Strength and Weakness”<sup>7</sup>, Iain Watson mentions how non-Western state donors have emerged as middle powers by sharing colonial experiences and contributing to the world through foreign aid. Here, he comments that part of South Korea’s state-led soft power diplomacy focuses on aid and how to effectively deliver aid which then enhances soft power of South Korea. The hypothesis behind his argument is that delivering aid to other countries automatically enhances a country’s soft power, thus promoting the ‘national brand’, which might not be applicable to the real world. Similarly, Suzuki Shogo’s paper deals mainly with Chinese soft power while arguing that although China does not yet have a systematic attempt to disregard the Western model of development, it is actively displaying its ‘charm offensive’ to alleviate fears

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<sup>6</sup> Wolf et al. “China’s Foreign Aid and Government-Sponsored Investment Activities: Scale, Content, Destinations, and Implications”. *National Defense Research Institute*, 2013. p.52-53

<sup>7</sup> Watson, Iain. “Beyond Aid Effectiveness?: Private and Public Partnerships in South Korea’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) Strategy as Soft Power Strength and Weakness”. *International Studies Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (June 2013), 91-124.

of a 'Chinese Threat'. Here, he slightly touches upon the fact that the non-interventionist nature of China's aid to developing countries potentially raises Chinese soft power, but does not go into detail about which aspects of aid contribute or harm Chinese soft power or the specific aid projects of China.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, it is not always the case that the more aid, the better the image of the donor country. However, not much research has questioned whether it was actually soft power, rather than hard power, that the donors have targeted in their foreign aid strategy. This is understandable since evaluating soft power is time-consuming, considering that an image towards a country does not form instantly in a short period of time. While hard power such as military actions or economic sanctions can derive relatively immediate reactions and responses from the target country, the impact of non-material and symbolic resources need a longer time to see its effect, which explains why not many scholars have tried to deal with this concept.

Thus, there is more to be explored regarding the generalization in the relation between foreign aid and soft power, as will be seen from various aid projects of China. In order to overcome these simplified generalizations, this paper will introduce a detailed framework of soft power and apply the framework to China's aid toward Africa. It will look at the specific cases of aid delivery and explore which aspects can be seen as either hard or soft power of the donor country.

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<sup>8</sup> Suzuki, Shogo. "Chinese Soft Power, Insecurity Studies, Myopia and Fantasy". *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.4, 2009, pp. 779-793.

It is also particularly important to explore China's aid delivery, which has a mixed approach of both hard and soft power. In his book *China's Aid and Soft Power in Africa*<sup>9</sup>, Kenneth King delves into why China engages in the capacity building of African people, mainly focusing on education or training. However, his analysis is also based on the assumption that the more engagement a country makes, the higher its soft power will be to the recipient countries. His detailed but somewhat narrow focus on training or scholarship programs also lead us to question the true definition of aid and whether other fields of aid can affect the soft power of China.

Despite the hardship to accumulate data due to the Chinese government's tendency to conceal information regarding its aid patterns, meaningful analysis and research on China's aid to Africa has been conducted by several scholars. Most notably, Deborah Brautigam's *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*<sup>10</sup> provides us a comprehensive account of Chinese engagement in Africa and its increasing role in various fields of aid. Here, she slightly touches upon the concept of 'soft power' in order to explain China's efforts to engage in more economic cooperation to display itself as a politically attractive partner in regards to the diplomatic war with Taiwan. Similarly however, further exploration of how this could consist of soft power and in what aspects it is regarded as soft power, not hard, is lacking in her piece.

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<sup>9</sup> King, Kenneth. *China's Aid and Soft Power in Africa: The Case of Education and Training*. Boydell & Brewer, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Brautigam, Deborah. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print



Studies analyzing China's soft power in various regions, especially towards developing countries, have been made not only by individual scholars but also by national research institutes. Among those is the CRS Report for U.S Congress, documented by Lum et al.<sup>11</sup> "China's "Soft Power" in Southeast Asia" covers the growing presence of China's soft power in Southeast Asia in diverse fields. Here, the aid industry is covered in detail for each individual recipient country. Another significant aspect of this paper is that several features of Chinese aid such as the "non-interference in domestic affairs" or funding for lavish government buildings or infrastructure are discussed which thus leads to an effective soft power increase of China. However, what is lacking is the detailed analysis of how such diverse projects and aid programs could ultimately lead to an increase of its soft power and further analysis of how each project was conducted and managed in the long-term basis.

Thus it is worth looking at this country's delivery process of foreign aid and investigating which kinds of 'soft power' elements it is focusing on. Moreover, contrary to the academia where 'soft power' is defined in a relatively consistent way, the term itself has been used with multiple connotations in the international arena, differing from country to country. Thus, this paper strives to analyze and examine in detail how the same term could be used in the Chinese kind of way, according to the countries' geopolitical, historical circumstances.

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<sup>11</sup> Lum et al. "China's "Soft Power" in Southeast Asia". *CRS Report for Congress*, 2008. pp.1-21

### **III. Analytical Framework**

#### **1. Analytical Framework**

Because soft power is such an abstract term, limitations abound when it comes to using a single framework for defining what soft power is in the aid industry. Also, unlike the common perception that data should be objective for its accuracy, this paper will take into account of both objective as well as subjective data due to the term's inherent subjective nature. Because aid is conducted in very different patterns in each country, multiple frameworks will be used simultaneously in order to look at the diverse aspects of aid.

Before going on to the specific framework, a specification of the type of soft power has to be lined out for the purpose of this paper. First, this paper will refer to the five different types of soft power that is delineated by Geun Lee in his paper, "A Theory of Soft Power and Korea's Soft Power Strategy"<sup>12</sup>. Here, the five different types are soft power (1) to improve the external security environment by projecting attractive images; (2) to mobilize other countries' support for foreign and security policies; (3) soft power to manipulate other countries' styles of thinking and preferences; (4) to maintain unity within a community or country; and (5) to increase approval ratings of a leader or domestic government.

Among these five types of soft power, this paper will mostly deal with the first

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<sup>12</sup> Lee, 2009. p.207-208

three, taking into account the goal of aid and the fact that aid is usually delivered from country to country rather than between groups or individuals. Thus, this paper will specifically deal with and focus on the soft power of a country towards another country, to create a favorable atmosphere around which it can seek national interest, rather than that of an individual, charity groups or a leader's domestic power towards the citizens.

For the term 'soft power', Joseph Nye's three pillars of soft power will be used as the main framework as well as the starting point of analysis. They are 1. Culture, 2. Political Values, and 3. Foreign Policy<sup>13</sup>. For the first pillar, culture refers to the extent of cultural appeal and how attractive a country's culture is to the counterpart country. Foreign aid revolving around protecting the recipient country's cultural assets and traditions or promoting education or training related to cultural aspects will be considered in this category. How much of cultural aspects the donor allocates or emphasizes in planning and distributing aid will be explored as well. Also, aid regarding the spread of the donor country's culture, including high culture as well as mass entertainment like literature, visual art, theater, television, cinema, media system and sports will be dealt in this part. The spread of education system and training will also be regarded in this part, since the education system, resources or institutions reflect a country's culture.

Next, some examples of political values that live up to the international community are transparency, justice, governance, openness, laws or core values such

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<sup>13</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2011, p.84.

as human rights and equality, which are values that are often lacked in developing countries. Aid regarding the themes of institutions and government agencies along with state policy, political organizations and systems will be mainly dealt in this part. The assumption will be that the more donors focus on enhancing and spreading these values, the more they try to enhance their own soft power toward the recipient countries by promoting political values that they support.

Lastly for foreign policy, whether the donor maintains legitimacy or moral authority towards other countries during the conduct of aid process will be checked. Here, issues regarding morality and legitimacy will be explored, such as whether the donor country abides by predetermined rules of aid. This aspect of aid will not only focus on aid itself, but also other political or economic relationship with the recipient country or even the donor country's role in the global world, which holds the potential to affect aid patterns.

Building on Nye's pillars of soft power, multiple indicators from well-known surveys or polls evaluating soft power will be used for a comprehensive analysis. Researches that aim to capture the attractiveness or favorability of a country like the Pew's Global Attitudes Project<sup>14</sup>, the BBC World Service's Country Ratings Poll<sup>15</sup>,

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<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes & Trends. 2017. <http://www.pewglobal.org/> Accessed 30 April 2017.

<sup>15</sup> BBC World Service Poll. "Negative views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll". June 2014.

IFG-Monocle Soft Power Index<sup>16</sup> or the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brand Index<sup>17</sup> are served as a useful reference or a proxy for the purpose of measuring soft power in the aid industry.

Of course, directly polling the recipient country, its leaders and the affected citizens would be the best way to capture the accurate perceptions toward the donor country. This would then show whether the donor's soft power strategy was effective or not. However, under the circumstance where such a method is impossible, the best alternative option is to analyze aid reports and patterns through the existing framework and evaluate the donor's soft power with such standards.

<Table 1> shows a combined version of soft power indicators or elements utilized by Joseph Nye, Soft Power 30<sup>18</sup>, and other surveys and polls mentioned above. Because Nye's sources of soft power are the most general and broad among the concepts, more specific indicators used in other polls were assorted according to the standard of Nye's 3 pillars of soft power. Similar or related elements from two or more different surveys are indicated only once and if needed, specified by using a parenthesis. The third column of this table is to specify and add up to the elements presented on the first two columns. Aside from the three pillars of soft power, elements of soft power that do not fit Nye's framework are grouped at the last (fourth) line of the

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<sup>16</sup> Monocle, Soft Power Survey 2015/2016. 2017. Accessed 30 April 2017.

<sup>17</sup> GfK, Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index. 2017. Accessed 30 April 2017.

<sup>18</sup> McClory et al. "The Soft Power 30: A Ranking of Global Soft Power 2016". Portland, 2016.

table as ‘Enterprise’. While economic aspects are usually classified as hard power, this group will focus on how much the donor country tries to foster local firms and how attractive the economic development model of the donor country is, rather than economic might and financial demands. These elements are chosen and selected by the writer by assessing the relevance and applicability of each element to the ‘aid’ industry. Any aid regarding the delivery of experiences and sharing know-how on the following indicators will be regarded as soft power in this paper.

**<Table 1> Indicators for Soft Power**

| Nye’s Framework  | Soft Power 30                                      | Indicators   |
|------------------|--|--|
| Culture*         | Music, Sports, Art, Education, and Digital Aspects | -Culture: Music, Sports, Art, Literature Exchanges<br>-Education: Student Exchanges, Facilitating Education in Recipient Countries, Language, Skill Training, Capacity Training<br>-Digital: ICT (Information and Communications Technology), Connectedness to the digital world, Usage of social media platforms, Access to internet, Digital and communications infrastructure |
| Political Values | Government   | -Governance: Public Institutions, Government Effectiveness, Successful Model of Domestic Government, Major   |

|                |            |   |
|----------------|------------|---|
|                |            | Public Policy Outcomes, Social Security<br>-Values: Individual Freedom, Human Rights, Equality, Transparency<br>-Development: Political Development Model   |
| Foreign Policy | Engagement | -Diplomatic Resources: Global Footprint, Contribution to the International Community, Collaboration<br>-Humanitarian Assistance: Human Development, Health, Disaster Relief, Peace-Building<br>-Improving People's Lives, Environment Protection                  |
|                | Enterprise | Attractiveness of Economic Model in terms of Competitiveness, Capacity for Innovation, Ability to foster Enterprise and Commerce (Different from 'economic might', which is closer to hard power), Entrepreneurship, Attractiveness of a country's Business Model |

\* According to the OECD-DAC's ODA reporting rules, cultural programs are eligible as ODA if they build the cultural capacities of recipient countries, but activities to promote the donors' image are excluded.<sup>19</sup> However for this paper, since soft power includes all activities to

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<sup>19</sup> OECD, Official development assistance-definition and coverage. 2017. Web. Accessed in 11 Mar 2017.

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm>

promote the donor's image, cultural activities that promote the donor country's image while contributing to building cultural capacities of recipient countries will be considered as aid.

In his paper mentioned above, Geun Lee emphasizes the 'conversion process' of soft power. In other words, he asserts that simply holding the necessary resources of soft power does not automatically mean a successful enhancement of soft power is guaranteed.<sup>20</sup> Thus, aid should not be simply about who gave what to whom but rather about the specific delivery process and what kind of aspects the donor country tried to target, measure or assess through that aid delivery.

It was not that there were no efforts to redefine or specify the definition of soft power. Acknowledging the vague definition that Nye provided, Geun Lee came up with an alternative definition of soft power by focusing on the quality of the resources used for exerting power to draw a distinction between hard and soft power.<sup>21</sup> For Nye, an influence was considered soft power when its attributes are coercive and non-violent, regardless of whether it utilized soft resources or hard resources. However, Lee took a departure from Nye's conception of soft power since Nye paid attention to the nature of the power rather than the resources used during the process. Lee tried to consider power a soft one, when soft resources such as ideas, images, theories, and culture are employed and regard a hard power when material or 'hard resources' are

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<sup>20</sup> Lee, 2009, pg.210

<sup>21</sup> Lee, 2009.



used to exert such influence.

Notwithstanding such valuable effort to redefine and conceptualize the definition of soft power, such definition will not be applied for this paper specifically. That is because aid uses hard power resources such as money, machinery, the donor's technology and natural resources from the donor country, as well as soft power resources such as culture, governance, values, experience and know-how. Using hard resources such as the donor country's advanced and state-of-the-art machinery could in the end induce admiration and positive image towards the donor country (soft power). In this case, hard resources were used but soft power of that country was enhanced. Thus by simply dividing hard and soft power according to the resources that an aid uses, it will not be able to capture the various aspects of power that aid carries throughout a long period of time. Since Lee's framework will not be applicable for this specific topic, this paper will mainly refer to Nye's original concept of soft power as well as the framework set above.

In terms of looking at the diverse aspects of soft power, the different stages of distributing aid to recipient countries will be divided into four parts: 1. Overall vision from Chinese government's policy intention and long-term approach, 2. Program design and plan, 3. Implementation Process, and 4. Monitoring or Post-evaluation of aid. The overall vision and long-term approach can be seen in government whitepapers as well as official speeches of national leaders or politicians. This could show the country's general approach towards foreign aid and soft power by the government in a long-term approach. The next stage, which is the program design and plan, can be seen

from the vision or the statement of purpose by the agency or institution that manages and takes in charge of specific aid projects. By looking at which aspects of soft power they focus on before implementing the aid, we could see the short-term plan and purpose of those aid institutions. Third, the implementation process can be retrieved from the specific projects' mid-term review or terminal evaluation. Examining what kind of soft power assets are used in the implementation process can be crucial in analyzing a country's soft power strategy. This part is especially important in matching whether the pre-designed plans are being realized into actual implementation processes. Lastly, this paper will look at the evaluation stage of aid projects which can be seen from annual reports or ex-post evaluation reports. It is crucial to note whether the donors have conducted a long-term impact evaluation of what kind of lasting effects their aid has brought upon to the recipient individuals or society. Donors that have included those aspects would likely consider soft power aspects as important assets of their national power compared to donors that haven't.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Compared to soft power, hard power is relatively easy to measure in quantitative terms. Indicators such as population size, concrete military assets or a nation's GDP (gross domestic product) can be used as a measurement of a country's hard power. However, soft power, which is the extent of attraction and shaping preferences, can only be aptly measured by looking at in-depth case studies or different nuances hidden in the country's behaviors or official documents. Thus, contrary to hard power

elements that enable the use of quantitative measures, investigating soft power of the donor country should be based on a qualitative research, including comprehensive understanding of the country's geopolitical situation as well as the reasons that govern such behavior.

This paper incorporates analysis of both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include statistics or data from international organizations and documents released by the government or government agencies. Secondary data are mostly prior researches, such as reports from research institutions, press releases and online references for a thorough qualitative research. Because foreign aid reflects a country's strategy and its attitude toward other countries, government white paper or annual reports on foreign aid as well as those of aid institutions will be used. Compared to other donor countries whose information is open and easily accessible online, China's information and system of how aid works is rarely disclosed for view of the public. Aid industry for China is still a sensitive area and specific data is rarely disclosed by the government or agencies of concern. Thus, reports from Chinese Ministry of Commerce (especially, Department of Foreign Aid), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, China EXIM Bank, as well as China Commerce Yearbook will be comprehensively examined to complement the lack of data. Specific aid projects and their evaluation will be referred to by scholarly papers on specific aid projects as well as case studies done by research institutes.

Among the reports published by the government or the aid agency, this paper will especially try to focus on the impact analysis of aid projects and programs. The

impact analysis of aid projects looks into what kind of changes aid has brought to the individuals, society, and the country as a whole in the long-run. The long-term impact evaluation of aid projects could indirectly show us how much of the donor's intention has been achieved and how effective the aid was in enhancing the country's soft power.

Meanwhile in the case of China, it has been argued that the conventional definition of aid that is used by the traditional OECD-DAC countries does not fit to China's case. Rather, China's action of assisting African countries can be seen as closer to an economic investment or business cooperation. However, this does not change the fact that China's engagement in Africa is not without its purpose to enhance its soft power. Thus, although this paper will endeavor to look at China's aid based mostly on the traditional definition, it will not apply too much strict of a standard on the exact percentage of grant or exploring into whether the main purpose of delivering aid was for the developmental purpose of the recipient country or China's own profits. Since the purpose of this paper is to explore what China is seeking while engaging in the African continent and what kind of intention and objective China holds when distributing its large share of wealth to Africa, the detailed definition of aid will not change the implications. In fact, China has not distinguished clearly the difference between aid and a win-win economic cooperation, which renders this paper to define China's aid in a broader term than that of the conventional definition of OECD.

## IV. Linking Aid and Soft Power

### 1. Concept of Soft Power

The original definition of “soft power” coined by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s was the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce or use force as a means of persuasion.<sup>22</sup> In other words, it is the ability to shape the preferences of others to want what you want. The counterpart of this concept is ‘hard power’, which is represented by physical force or coercive compensation and punishment, such as military power or economic sanctions.

However, the term ‘soft power’ is very abstract, vague, and thus is often defined based on the government or political leaders’ discretion. For one instance, Endo Seiji, professor at Seikei University of Japan has commented, “The history of contributing to the world peace as one of East Asia’s peaceful country and maintaining the exclusive defense security policy for 70 years is Japan’s biggest soft power.”<sup>23</sup> This technically does not go along with the traditional definition of Joseph Nye’s soft power since soft power here is connected to military power, which is normally associated with hard power.<sup>24</sup>

It is also worth noting that Nye introduced the concept of soft power in a tactical

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<sup>22</sup> Nye, 1990.

<sup>23</sup> 遠藤誠治. “『ソフトパワー』こそ最大の安全保障。” 渚 (October 2015), p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Nye, Joseph S. “U.S. Power and Strategy After Iraq”. *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2003 Issue. Web. Accessed 15 May 2017.

way to predict the persistence of the US hegemony during the 1980s, when it was going through a hard time, as frequently predicted by international scholars back at that time. His argument was that even if America's so-called hard power such as military and economic power is relatively declining, the soft power of American culture, democracy and liberalism is still expanding and thus will allow the persistence of the US-led liberal order of the world.

Because the concept was borne out of a strategic advice to sustain America's supremacy, it is reasonable that the concept is very abstract, vague and ambiguous. There is no set of frameworks or any specific theoretical indicators of soft power that is internationally agreed upon. Thus when trying to apply this concept to foreign aid, it requires a redefinition or a specific conceptualization. Thus, this paper will use specific indicators of the three pillars of soft power from the analytical framework that could represent a country's soft power.

This paper recognizes that foreign aid generally includes hard power factors such as severe conditionality or economic sanctions that force recipient countries to adopt certain measures. Sometimes, these factors can prove to be more effective in achieving the donor's goals in a short period of time. However, if the donor truly values mutual trust and sustainable development of the recipient country, although relatively time-consuming, conciliation through bilateral cooperation and exercising soft power through consistent interaction will more likely guarantee positive feedbacks from the recipient country. This goes hand in hand with what Joseph Nye has noted about the US's recent tendency to exert more hard power such as military power and

economic sanctions to dominate the world, especially when participating in the Gulf War and the Iraq War<sup>25</sup>, and thus hampering the soft power that it has built up until now.

In terms of soft power, this paper will focus more on building social infrastructure such as education and health care facilities and improving the local people's lives rather than huge construction or commercial projects. The writer acknowledges the fact that even aid projects that highly use hard resources such as building bridges or technical cooperation can in the end enhance the soft power of the donor country. However even for these projects, this paper will mainly focus on the know-how that China tried to deliver or the aspect of improving its own image when it comes to soft power analysis, rather than the direct economic benefit it gains. This is because for the intangible benefits and values, the results cannot be seen right away and rather needs long term vision in order to see the actual effects. This means that when donor countries focus on these aspects, their main objective is less of gaining commercial benefit but more for building trust and enhancing its reputation in the international community as a responsible donor.

## **2. Soft Power, Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy**

The term “soft power” is often interchangeably used with a country's “foreign policy” or “public diplomacy”, thus requiring an explanation of why this paper particularly focuses on “soft power” rather than other similar terms. It is worth looking

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<sup>25</sup> Nye, 2003. Web. Accessed 15 May 2017.

at the relationship between soft power and foreign aid, since foreign policy and soft power differ in various aspects. First, soft power is more subtle than foreign policy. Whereas foreign policy is intentional and mostly carried out by the leader or the government as a result of thorough discussion, soft power can occur even without the performer, whether it be the government, leader, international organization, or any individual, noticing it. Contrarily, foreign policy is made out of thorough contemplation and out of conscious expectation of how the counterpart country would react. On the other hand, soft power could be unintentional and is less predictive than foreign policy, thus allowing scholars to explore the expected as well as unexpected impacts of the donor's aid toward the recipient country.

Next, while foreign policy might bring about positive as well as negative consequences to the relationship of two or more countries, soft power is based on an expectation of positive consequence from other countries. This is one of the reasons why leaders and politicians prefer using this term, aiming to engender an ambience of low-pressure and amiability. Similarly, soft power is a bilateral concept where the two sides share values. One country convinces and the other country voluntarily follows. Compared to this, 'foreign policy' is a unilateral concept in which the performer of such policy acts upon the other country without necessarily anticipating a positive reaction. Some foreign policies are conducted regardless of predictable negative responses. In this sense, it is deemed appropriate for foreign aid to be analyzed from a soft power perspective, considering the interactive process of aid distribution and the growing importance of feedbacks from recipient countries.



Lastly, foreign policy is often targeted for short-term results compared to soft power, which is a concept generally targeting a long-term process. Assuming that hard power such as military action or economic sanctions are part of a foreign policy, these measures are delivered at one go and the expected responses come relatively right away. However, like foreign aid, asserting soft power and enhancing one's image or trust levels toward other countries take longer time and need steady effort to actually see a visible result.

Soft power is also different from propaganda or public diplomacy. Propaganda usually holds various objectives such as to convincingly pacify a certain group of people yet also to threaten or menace, while soft power is mostly to charm or attract a targeted audience. This is why soft power usually requires a sincere bonding based on common values. Meanwhile, propaganda includes coercing as well as cheating and fabricating facts or images about a policy or a political character. In the case of public diplomacy, soft power is a much broader and comprehensive concept. This is because soft power aims to attract and charm both in the government elite level as well as in the public's level. Meanwhile, public diplomacy is usually directly targeted towards the public rather than any higher level of actor such as the government. Soft power also utilizes diverse mechanisms not only limited to cultural mechanisms, which are mainly the case for public diplomacy.

### **3. Connection between Foreign Aid and Soft Power**

Despite the theoretical hardship to connect soft power and foreign aid due to the

above mentioned ambiguities, the two concepts are often linked together in the scholarly world and used complementarily in real world. The commonality of the two is that both concepts are closely related to promoting national interest. Foreign aid is often deemed as a method to demonstrate a country as a responsible member of the international society. Western donors often use aid as a tool to exercise leadership. This is very similar to a country's soft power since this power becomes more effective when a country becomes able to exert leadership with its prominence, easily exerting soft power to a wider region than a country that has a less penetrating impact to the international community.

Soft power enhancement leads to a more favorable image towards other countries. This means that there is less possibility for other countries to form antagonistic security, military, or economic policies. Moreover, it is particularly important to satisfy the general public of other countries than the past, due to the advanced information technology that backs up the rapid spread of information. Furthermore, because public opinion is regarded with much more significance than the past, it is important to target the general public rather than few government elites when coming up with a soft power strategy in order that the whole country does not turn its back. Similarly, aid strategies these days cannot be decided solely by the government. Due to increased transparency and active participation in politics, the opinions of civil sectors, private sectors, and the general public all matter heavily in deciding specific policies for aid. Moreover, when aid is used in the right way with the right purpose, it not only acts as a crucial role for the recipient's development but also as a tool to

promote the donor's brand image and smartly deliver its assets to other countries.

Thus the formation or manipulation of a favorable image toward China through aid can later on improve the political and economic environment within Africa or even to other countries by trickling down to further regions in favor of China. This strategy of soft power through aid could then bring more gains to China by a 'network effect'<sup>26</sup>, which happens when a number of countries agree upon preference towards a country, or a country's specific model of development such as the 'Beijing Consensus'. The 'Beijing Consensus', characterized by Joshua Cooper Ramo<sup>27</sup>, is an alternative of the 'The Washington Consensus', which is the political and economic reforms of IMF and World Bank that most of the Western countries have followed.<sup>28</sup> The Chinese development model of modernization or its pattern of aid delivery could be positively recognized by recipient countries as a new model, leading to enhance China's image.

As a reference, Japan, one of China's neighboring country and a powerful competitor in the region, is often commented as a country that tactfully uses its aid to enhance its soft power. Looking at how another country utilizes aid in such purpose could help one understand better how soft power is elevated through the act of foreign aid. Japan since the post-war period has been putting much effort to project its peaceful

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<sup>26</sup> Lee, 2009, p.128

<sup>27</sup> Ramo, Joshua Cooper. *The Beijing Consensus*. Foreign Policy Centre (London, England), 2004. pp.1-74

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, p.1

image by constructing the Peace Constitution, restraining their Self Defense Force, but most importantly, providing foreign aid to the Southeast Asian region to gain their support in the new era.

Japan invaded Southeast Asian countries during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Southeast Asian countries that were inflicted upon huge damage due to Japan's invasion started to request for compensation. Japan also regarded reparation toward each country the basis of normalizing with those countries. Thus Japan's foreign aid had a strong characteristic of compensating for the war as well as paying off the vestige of colonization for its future-oriented advancement into the global society. Japan's development aid for improving its war criminal image was focused on fields of social development that revolves around second-class citizens and aid that contributes to forming an Asian Community based on similar values such as democracy and liberalism.

Owing to these efforts, Japan was able to see success in enhancing its national image through aid within the Southeast Asian region. According to an opinion poll of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries conducted by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2008 and 2014, over the 7 years, more percentage of people in the ASEAN countries replied that they saw Japan as a trustworthy partner and a country with cool image. Also, more than 90% of the respondents of ASEAN countries answered "friendly" or "somewhat friendly" when asked about how they

viewed their country's relations with Japan.<sup>29</sup> Of course it is hard to sort out whether aid was the one and only reason behind this result, but it is with no doubt that Japan's focus of aid toward the region contributed to its overall positive image, a big leap from the lingering post-war image.

Given that Japan was partially able to overcome the negative image that it had been struggling to combat by aid policies, aid could be a powerful tool to enhance a country's soft power. Hence it is worthwhile to see China's attempts to reap a similar benefit of national image by pouring huge amount of money to the African region.

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Japan. "Opinion Poll on Japan in ASEAN Countries" 2014. [http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_000271.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000271.html) Accessed on 7 May 2017.

## **V. China's Role in Africa**

It is interesting to look at China's case of aid delivery among other donors since the start of the new century China tried to put emphasis on its peaceful growth. China has been criticized for not holding soft power as much as it does for hard power by many Western scholars or politicians and thus put much effort on minimizing a threatening and dominating image of itself. Providing aid to destitute countries was one of its strategies to overcome its legitimacy deficit in the international society.

China's active engagement in the third world countries, especially Africa could also be a result of the competition between the two big rivals of East Asia. Japan and China have been engaging in the Southeast Asian region from early times but recently this head-to-head rivalry is moving to Africa. Both Japan and China's aid volume is growing year by year in this region. The two countries are trying to establish a sphere of interest in the region through foreign aid, regarding the rich natural resources and economic opportunities Africa holds.

China, like Japan, is a country that heavily depends on resource import. This makes China focus more on how to maintain their reputation and relationship with other countries for securing resources as well as procuring the sea lane for importing them.<sup>30</sup> Thus it will be interesting to look at how China secures its strategic interest while at the same time endeavors to foster a beneficial atmosphere for its emerging global stance.

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<sup>30</sup> 遠藤誠治. “『ソフトパワー』こそ最大の安全保障。” 潮 (October 2015)

Although acknowledging that Africa receives aid from most of the developed countries around the world, China's uniqueness lies from the fact that their aid is different from the West's ideas about aid, which will be explored further in the following chapters. China is also confident in their potential to prove a good model of economic development since its development was accomplished fairly recently compared to European or North American countries. Moreover, China is not blamed of their past history like France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom for their gruesome history of colonizing the African countries.

Among the various countries that China delivers aid to, there are some reasons why China's aid to Africa is worth exploring. In the past, China has been striving to attract the Southeast Asian region for decades, considering the proximity of the region as well as their natural resources. Although aid to ASEAN countries is conducted to this date as usual, too much interest and relation of gain or loss in political and economic aspects are tangled within the region that China's aid only acts as a limited method of breakthrough of relations. It is in fact difficult for China to play a positive and influential role given the South China Sea conflict, historical wars regarding the ethnic Chinese and several border disputes with countries like Vietnam. These kinds of long-standing territorial and historical disputes which are strongly embedded in each country's nationalism will not see a concrete settlement in the near future. This is why Africa has emerged as a new region for profit as well as coopting, void of such historical and geopolitical conflicts present in Southeast Asia. China especially has been prominent in the aid scene since the 21<sup>st</sup> century for its huge investments and

engagement in the region as well.

Africa was also underdeveloped compared to other third world countries in Southeast Asia due to lack of technology and inefficient investment from developed countries. A great portion of their land is left undeveloped, which led China to seek this blue ocean as a prospective storehouse of abundant reserves for natural resources as well as commercial benefits.



## **VI. China's Foreign Aid and Soft Power**

### **1. Overview of Chinese Foreign Aid**

China's attitude toward aid was focused on South-South cooperation from the beginning, which was seen as a huge departure from the traditional donors' pattern of North-South cooperation where a developed country helped a developing country. Here, as a country that once had been colonized by the global big powers, China emerged as the leader of the third world countries.<sup>31</sup> China's foreign aid toward Africa began during the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in 1955.<sup>32</sup> During this time, China was trying to look for allies in Africa that could support itself, as its tie and relationship with the Soviet Union was worsening. China figured that African countries that have just achieved independence could be strong supporters of China in United Nations, especially with their dispute with Taiwan. In the same vein, China also supported the liberation movement of several African countries during the 1960s and 70s.<sup>33</sup> By 1973, China's aid recipients were seven in Asia, six in the Middle East, three in Latin America, and twenty-nine in Africa, which shows its exceptional focus and attention to attract and engage in the region.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ayodele and Sotola, 2014, p.3.

<sup>32</sup> Ayodele and Sotola, 2014, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, D. 2005. "China's soft power in Africa: from the "Beijing Consensus" to health diplomacy", *China Brief* 5, 21: 1-4.

<sup>34</sup> Brautigam, p.41.

However, this interest in the African region plunged when China diverted its attention to domestic development of their economy during the 1980s and more so to engage with capitalist countries for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)<sup>35</sup>. During this time the flow of Chinese aid toward the African countries shrunk for a certain period of time.

Then, just before the start of the new millennium, China reversed its attention again back to the destitute continent, acknowledging the potential for Africa's development opportunities as well as their abundant resources. This also coincided with China recognizing that it is painful to rely on the West due to their harsh economic sanctions and political isolation after the Tiananmen Square incident.<sup>36</sup> Since this period, China varied the source of its fund as well as the method and the targeted fields of aid. As it did so, the official flow also dramatically increased while recognizing that aid could be a useful tool for enhancing its national image and soft power. From this period, it acknowledged that aid was not only for its own benefit in terms of political or commercial benefits, but also a valuable gateway for it to emerge as a responsible superpower in the global scene.

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<sup>35</sup> Ayodele and Sotola, 2014, p.3.

<sup>36</sup> Ayodele and Sotola, 2014, p.3.

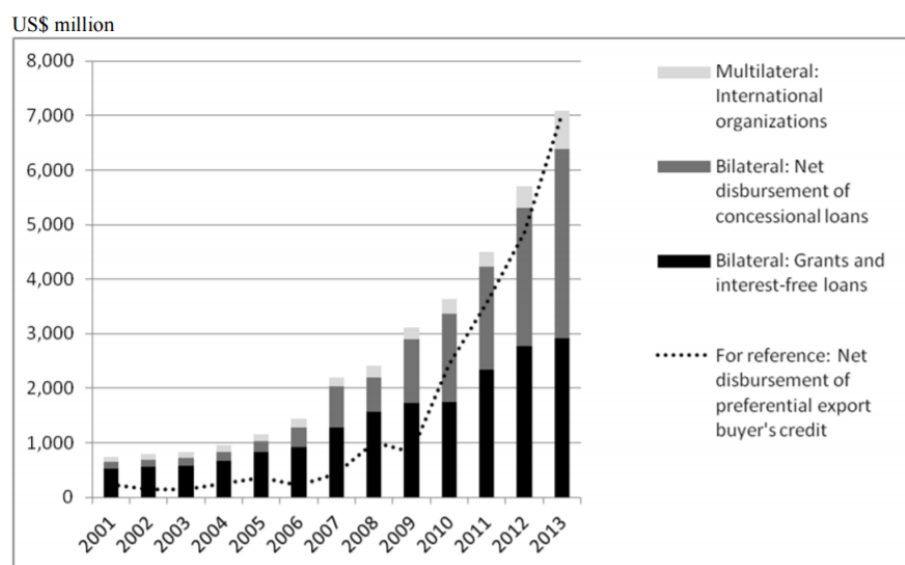
<Table 2-3-1> Estimation of China's Net Foreign Aid (RMB million)<sup>37</sup>

| Year | Central government expenditure for foreign aid | Sum of central government expenditure for foreign aid and gross disbursement of concessional loans |
|------|--|--|
| 2001 | 4,711  | 5,900  |
| 2002 | 5,003  | 6,200  |
| 2003 | 5,223  | 6,500  |
| 2004 | 6,069  | 7,600  |
| 2005 | 7,470  | 9,400  |
| 2006 | 8,237  | 11,500   |
| 2007 | 11,154   | 17,400   |
| 2008 | 12,559   | 17,600   |
| 2009 | 13,296   | 22,100   |
| 2010 | 13,611   | 25,600   |
| 2011 | 15,898   | 29,400   |
| 2012 | 16,695   |  |
| 2013 | 17,049   |  |

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<sup>37</sup> Kitano and Harada, "Estimating China's Foreign Aid 2001-2013, Comparative Study on Development Cooperation Strategies: Focusing on G20 Emerging Economies", JICA-RI Working Paper, No.78 June 2014, p.16.

< Table 2-3-2> Estimated China's Net Foreign Aid<sup>38</sup>



Source: Table 1

<sup>38</sup> Kitano and Harada, 2014, p.18

<Table 2-3-3> Ranking on DAC members' net ODA and China's net foreign aid<sup>39</sup>

| Ranking | 2001         | 2003         | 2005         | 2007         | 2009         | 2011         | 2013         |
|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1       | US           | US           | US           | US           | US           | US           | US           |
| 2       | Japan        | Japan        | Japan        | Germany      | France       | Germany      | UK           |
| 3       | Germany      | France       | UK           | France       | Germany      | UK           | Germany      |
| 4       | UK           | Germany      | Germany      | UK           | UK           | France       | Japan        |
| 5       | France       | UK           | France       | Japan        | Japan        | Japan        | France       |
| 6       | Netherlands  | Netherlands  | Netherlands  | Netherlands  | Spain        | Netherlands  | <b>China</b> |
| 7       | Spain        | Italy        | Italy        | Spain        | Netherlands  | Sweden       | Sweden       |
| 8       | Sweden       | Sweden       | Canada       | Sweden       | Sweden       | Canada       | Norway       |
| 9       | Denmark      | Norway       | Sweden       | Canada       | Norway       | Australia    | Netherland   |
| 10      | Italy        | Canada       | Spain        | Italy        | Canada       | Norway       | Canada       |
| 11      | Canada       | Spain        | Norway       | Norway       | Italy        | <b>China</b> | Australia    |
| 12      | Norway       | Belgium      | Denmark      | Australia    | <b>China</b> | Italy        | Italy        |
| 13      | Switzerland  | Denmark      | Belgium      | Denmark      | Denmark      | Spain        | Switzerland  |
| 14      | Australia    | Switzerland  | Switzerland  | <b>China</b> | Australia    | Switzerland  | Denmark      |
| 15      | Belgium      | Australia    | Australia    | Belgium      | Belgium      | Denmark      | Belgium      |
| 16      | <b>China</b> | <b>China</b> | Austria      | Austria      | Switzerland  | Belgium      | Spain        |
| 17      | Austria      | Finland      | <b>China</b> | Switzerland  | Finland      | Finland      | Korea        |

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<sup>39</sup> Kitano and Harada, 2014, p.17.

< Table 2-3-4> Comparison of DAC member's net ODA and China's net foreign aid<sup>40</sup>



Sources: OECD International Development Statistics and Table 1

As can be seen from <Table 2-3-1> and <Table 2-3-2>, China's foreign aid has seen a sharp increase over the years starting from the new century. <Table 2-3-2> shows that the increase can be seen even when looking at each form of aid, in both multilateral as well as bilateral aid. This shows that China in overall is recognizing the importance of foreign aid for its reputation and role in the global society. <Table 2-3-3> and <Table 2-3-4> show how much China has emerged to play a vital role in the international aid field as well as how much the relative amount of its aid has increased over time. <Table 2-3-3> shows net foreign aid of China when compared to that of the OECD-DAC donor countries. Its rank started off around 16 to 17 but surged up to the top 10 countries in terms of the amount of aid. This steady presence of China within

<sup>40</sup> Kitano and Harada, 2014, p.20

the international community allowed China to build credibility and a strong foundation for its relationship with the recipient countries.

China's active engagement in Africa can be seen from various policies and government decisions starting from the late 1990s. In 1993, China established a 'Foreign Aid Joint Venture Fund' so that China and Africa could engage in the joint venture in diverse fields, from technology, education, human development to humanitarian support and medical dispatch. The year 2006 was designated China's "Year of Africa"<sup>41</sup>, which shows how much the Chinese government thought of Africa as a major country to engage in. Since the year 2000, an official forum between Africa and China called the 'Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)' was held to exchange views on the cooperation of the two regions as well as to consolidate the foundation for the strong tie between China and Africa. In these meetings, China regularly promises Africa for expanding aid and allowing tariff exemption.

From 2010 to 2012, China established 86 economic infrastructure projects in Africa.<sup>42</sup> In 2012, China also engaged in trans-national and trans-regional infrastructure construction cooperation partnership with African countries.<sup>43</sup> Through these partnerships, China also took care of the planning stage of the projects concerned, as well as support for feasibility studies for aid projects. By doing so, China was able

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<sup>41</sup> Brautigam, pg.40

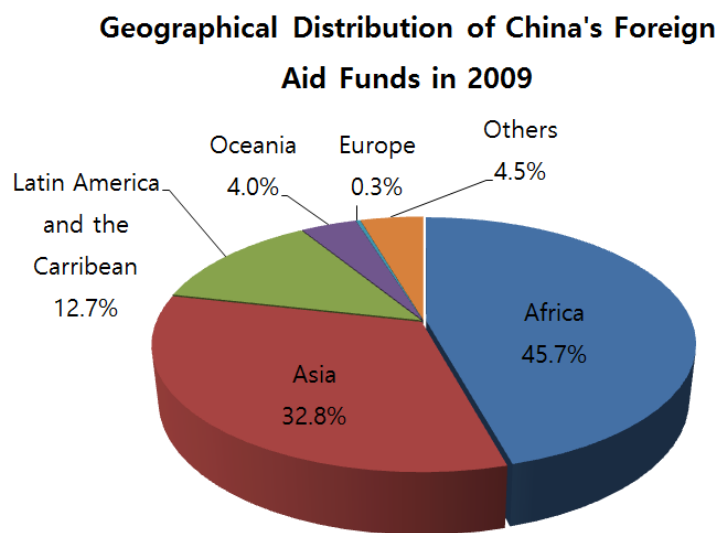
<sup>42</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.7

<sup>43</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

to facilitate related enterprises and firms within China to take part in the projects as well as to assist developing countries to build their own capacity by cooperating with these enterprises from China.

China also took part in African Development Bank's annual meeting to promise the increase of investment. In 2016, China launched the 'China-Africa Industrial Cooperation Fund' to help Africa's industrialization and keep a close partnership with African countries. This fund will allow China to carry out not only commodity-based aid, but also participate in the larger scale construction aid such as high-speed rail networks or aviation networks.

<Figure 2-3-1> Geographical Distribution of China's Foreign Aid Funds<sup>44</sup>

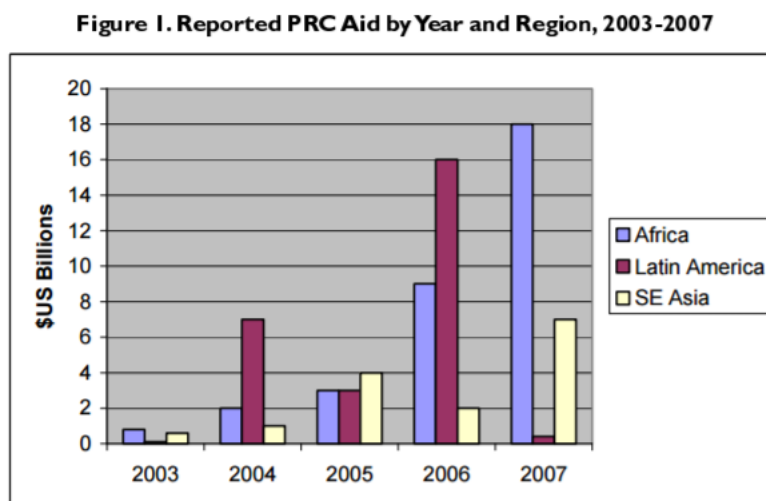


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<sup>44</sup> China's White Paper on Foreign Aid, 2011, Beijing, Information Office of the State Council, People's Republic of China.



<Figure 2-3-2> Reported PRC Aid by Year and Region, 2003-2007<sup>45</sup>



China is now engaging and investing in almost every country in Africa. <Figure 2-3-1> reveals the geographical distribution of China's foreign aid in 2009. We can see that China, although having Asia as its backyard, directs more amount of aid to the African continent rather than neighboring or nearby developing countries. What's more, from <Figure 2-3-2>, we can see that when the amount of aid transferred to other regions fluctuate over time, aid directed to Africa has seen a constant increase, showing China's keen attention to the potential chances that Africa holds and its growing intention to actively engage in the continent. China also provides assistance to regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), not only limiting its aid to single

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<sup>45</sup> NYU Wagner School, Understanding Chinese Foreign Aid: A Look at China's Development Assistance to Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, April 25, 2008. Quoted from Lum et al. China's Foreign Aid Activities in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, February 25, 2009.

countries.

In terms of dealing with China's aid, the Ministry of Commerce and the Chinese Export Import Bank is in charge. While most advanced countries whose history of aid distribution is long allows the diverse opinions of all walks of life in the country for deciding a country's aid business, societal influences are meager in determining the different aspects of China's aid. In other words, the most important factors and aspects for Chinese aid are the state's political and commercial interest, rather than the mass public's opinion for aid distribution.

## **2. Reasons for Chinese Foreign Aid**

The strategic thrusts for Chinese aid programs can be categorized mainly into three aspects. The first aspect is the commercial benefit, where China hopes to expand its target of export and foray into new markets overseas, while encourage its infant corporations to expand their scope. In fact, this aspect was more apparent in the past when compared to the present. China's Xinhua news agency even mentioned explicitly that China is planning to use its budget for foreign aid and fund "to boost production and exploit natural resources."<sup>46</sup> It hopes to promote export-oriented industries and gain trade benefits from this. Taking into the growing population of Africa into consideration, facilitating China's export to a potentially new region for a wide

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<sup>46</sup> "Bu Ming on Banking Contracts with Abroad", Xinhua, February 6, 1980. Quoted from Brautigam, p.48

consumer market will allow China to expand the range of its own products. China is also viewed by other countries to be selecting countries with rich natural resources therefore leading to an eradication of its domestic energy shortage.

Next, China is distributing aid so as to gain political and diplomatic benefit, especially against Taiwan. It was crucial for China to court the African countries when the United States set out to assist Taiwan to diplomatically engage with Africa's newly independent countries during the 1960s. Also, it was especially important for China to win new friends within the new countries in Africa to balance between Washington and Moscow, breaking from its once-ally due to ideological differences and sustaining its anti-capitalist stance. This can be seen from the fact that countries that were on the socialist road such as Tanzania, Guinea, and Sierra Leone received relatively more aid in Africa, compared to countries that did not. Thus its strategic diplomacy of utilizing aid was a result of wrestling with Taiwan and countering the Western influences. This political strategy is also said to be "one of the reasons why China is keeping its aid record in the dark"<sup>47</sup>, according to Carol Lancaster.

The last reason is the most central for this paper: capacitating itself up for a better image toward the world. This perspective is closely related to soft power, as this involves China's cultural ideologies and values of 'peaceful development' and 'harmonization of the world' which is also emphasized by the Confucius Institute that China is fervently establishing around the world. The three main reasons of China's aid

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<sup>47</sup> Lancaster, Carol. 2007. "The Chinese Aid System." Center for Global Development

are not mutually exclusive since soft power is also closely related to how much the donor country tries to reap commercial benefits or utilize foreign policies.

### **3. Principles of Chinese Foreign Aid**

By looking at the principles of Chinese aid that has been clarified by the government, we could see the difference of characteristics between the Chinese and the traditional Western aid. The ‘Eight Principles of Foreign Aid’ proposed by then-Prime Minister Zhou En Lai in 1964<sup>48</sup> were:

1. The Chinese Government always bases itself on the principle of equality and mutual benefit in providing aid to other countries.
2. The Chinese Government strictly respects the sovereignty of the recipient countries, and never attaches any conditions or asks for any privileges.
3. China provides economic aid in the form of interest-free or low-interest loans and extends the time limit for the repayment when necessary so as to lighten the burden of the recipient countries as far as possible.
4. Donor’s aid should be for autonomous development of the donee countries.
5. Target of investment should be where involving the least amount of investment

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<sup>48</sup> “The Chinese Government's Eight Principles for Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries,” January 15, 1964, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu and Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, eds., Zhou Enlai waijiao wenxuan (Selected Diplomatic Papers of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1990), 388. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121560>

and shortest term of payback in ways favoring the donee countries.

6. Donor's support of quality facility and equipment should be at the market price, ensuring refund and replacement of the disqualified.

7. Donor's technical support shall ensure the transfer of technology to the technicians of the donee countries.

8. The experts dispatched by China to help in construction in the recipient countries will have the same standard of living as the experts of the recipient country. The Chinese experts are not allowed to make any special demands or enjoy any special amenities.

These eight principles although designated more than 50 years ago, still form the basis of China's aid approach to this date. China's Foreign Aid White Paper of 2014 still mentions that "the basic principles China upholds in providing foreign assistance are mutual respect, equality, keeping promise, mutual benefits and win-win."<sup>49</sup>

As shown from these principles, it is clear that China's approach to aid is different from that of the traditional West's. The most apparent distinction is that the Western countries highlight that transparency is a crucial factor in aid distribution. Because most of the donors are a member of the OECD-DAC, they have to report their aid practices on a regular basis, based on a set of criteria and schedule. They have to

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<sup>49</sup> China's Information Office of the State Council, "China's Foreign Aid White Paper (2014)". Beijing, July 2014.

notify whether they have succeeded in meeting specific standards and to promise their efforts for 'aid effectiveness' as well as 'mutual learning'. However, China never sees these aspects as importance as seen apparently in their principles. China also is not regulated by a third party or an objective supervision of an international organization in terms of the specific details about its aid practices.

Another interesting feature of China's aid is that it exercises tied aid, which is a practice the Western countries have decided to gradually reduce. This goes along China's aid principle of 'equality' and 'mutual benefit' in which China is keen on reaping its own benefits while assisting the recipient countries. Tied aid, according to OECD is "offering aid on the condition that it be used to procure goods or services from the provider of the aid." Tied aid, in principle, hinders the recipient countries the option of procuring services and goods from other sources. China's stance is that it is practical and rational for recipient countries to purchase Chinese materials, services, and resources since its loan is offered in low-interest, thus beneficial for the recipient countries and explains why the demand for Chinese machinery and equipment cannot be but high. This rationalization by the Chinese government explains why China's aid has such a high level of tied aid.

However, other countries criticize China's tied-aid by pointing out that it is due to the lack of transparency in biddings and contracts that causes China to continue this kind of practice. But still, China, under its conviction to make 'more than half of the source materials China-bound' and that 'loan-involving projects shall be performed by

Chinese private companies<sup>50</sup>, is still tying aid to exports and thus gaining commercial profits. It is mentioned in the preface of its Foreign Aid White Paper (2014) that “it [China] has endeavored to integrate the interests of the Chinese people with people of other countries...to reduce poverty and improve livelihood.”<sup>51</sup> From this, we could see that China does not leave out the idea of how aid should not only be beneficial to the recipient countries, but also be beneficial to the well-being of the Chinese people as well. Mutual benefit and win-win cooperation is essential for China’s aid toward recipient countries and China believes that without such principle, aid “cannot be sustained...if it is limited to one-way aid.”<sup>52</sup>

The first two principles of Chinese aid are closely related to its ‘non-intervention’ principle, where China puts almost no conditionality for the domestic affairs of the recipient countries, while the Western world does for good governance, political liberalization or fiscal discipline. China explicitly makes clear in its Foreign Aid White Paper that,

“China adheres to the principles of not imposing any political conditions, not interfering in the internal affairs of the recipient countries and fully respecting their right to independently choose their own paths and models of

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<sup>50</sup> Kobayashi, Takaaki. “Evolution ODA China’s Aid Policy: JBICI Working paper.” Japan Bank for International Cooperation, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper (2014), Information Office of the State Council, The People’s Republic of China, July 2014, Beijing.

<sup>52</sup> *Beijing Review*, September 5, 1983, p.18 quoted from Brautigam, p. 54

development”.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, China’s way of giving aid is usually deemed more ‘generous’ than the West. The word ‘generous’ does not necessarily mean that its way of delivering aid is ‘better’ than that of the West. China grants a longer grace period and years for redemption, when compared to the Western countries. The gap is especially more so for recipient countries that are in close economic relationship with China. China asserts that they will keep the ‘mutual respect of sovereignty’ principal, which is one of the nation’s ‘principles of peaceful foreign relations’<sup>54</sup>, applied within the foreign assistance field.

However, this kind of non-intervention principle by China has been criticized by the West as overlooking gross violation of core values such as human rights. For instance, China has received harsh international criticism for neglecting human right as well as anti-democracy issues of Sudan during the Darfur Conflict of 2003. Passing over these issues, China focused its attention rather on procuring resources and securing its foreign market by means of active foreign aid.

Meanwhile this in turn could be considered an effective soft power exertion in the eye of the recipient country. The non-intervention principle is probably much

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<sup>53</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.1

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China. “China’s Initiation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence”. 2014. Accessed on 3 May 2017.



welcomed by African countries that have a history of being colonized, since for China's case, there is no enforcement or any potential invasion of sovereignty, with no colonial hangover. This would be in stark comparison to traditional European donors who have a past history of securing ownership of African countries' mines under the good name of industrialization or economic development. African countries could also appreciate being treated equal and respected of their ownership in aid rather than in a hierarchical way of donor-donee relationship where one tells the other to do certain things in certain ways.

This kind of attitude is in clear comparison with Western donors who attach harsh and painful conditions of political governance or social reformation based on the Washington Consensus. Even if these conditions are all for a better situation of the African region in the future, many countries struggle with following up these conditions in a short period of time. Despite the conditionality receiving international approval for upholding human rights or democracy and good governance, the African countries might not feel respected in terms of seeking their own way of development. Some scholars even view this as a new way of colonialism. Thus it is beneficial for China since it is relatively easier to build trust with the African countries and further their engagement without harsh impediments.

## **VII. Soft Power in Chinese Aid toward Africa**

### **1. Soft Power in Chinese Government's Policy Intention and Long-term Approach**

This part will explore what the Chinese government or its leader expressed for their general attitude or plan of aid. This part will outline the overall intention of China when giving out aid as well as its long-term approach in planning aid for its own interest. It will be mainly divided into three parts: political, economic, and an overall emphasis on partnership.

First of all, China has continuously emphasized the benefits of establishing diplomatic relations with itself rather than with Taiwan, whose diplomatic tie would automatically cancel the tie with China. For instance, in the 2006 FOCAC, Premier Wen Jiabao pledged to raise China's trade volume with Africa by doubling up the aid by 2009 and reaching about USD 100 billion by 2010.<sup>55</sup> In 2009, he went on to say that China's aid will include: foreign assistance, debt cancellation, solar and renewable energies, tackling climate change, tariff exemption, scientific aid, agricultural aid, building local hospitals, training medical personnel, expanding government scholarship and investing in human resources development as well as academic and literary support

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<sup>55</sup> Ministry of Commerce of People's Republic of China, "China-Africa trade expected to top 100 bln USD by 2010." November 04, 2006. Web.  
[http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt\\_focac/lanmua/200611/20061103631550.html](http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_focac/lanmua/200611/20061103631550.html)

policies<sup>56</sup>. A comprehensive coverage of China's aid along with its sudden emerge as a powerful global superpower in the international community encouraged a majority of countries to cut off ties with Taiwan and engage in a new relationship with China, or strengthen their original ties with China. The most obvious case was Malawi which set up new diplomatic ties with China while severing its ties with Taiwan in December of 2007. When evaluating whether China's soft power was a success in terms of political power, we could take into account that more countries have severed their ties with Taiwan and engaged with China, than they have before receiving China's aid. This shows that in terms of its political competition with Taiwan, China has seen a successful outcome of utilizing aid to enhance its soft power in the political sphere.

The next aspect is the economic sector, especially concerning China's domestic shortage of natural resources. There have been various opinions pointing out that China is engaging in aid in order to solve the energy shortage and a resulting pressure for domestic demand. In fact, in January of 2006, China mentioned in its policy toward Africa that "We are to procure African resources in search of mutually favorable development by varying points of international contact" and to "seek a more effective method to supply Africa's raw materials to the Chinese market."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> 「家宝提出八举措推进中非」, 『新华社新闻』 9 Nov 2011, [www.XINJUANET.com](http://www.XINJUANET.com) quoted from Kim, Seong-Ae. "An analysis of the China's Official Flows volume expansion: Focusing on the increase in cases of Official Flows since the late 1990s." p.8

<sup>57</sup> Kwon and Park, "중국의 대외원조정책과 추진체제", Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), 10-10, 2010, p.28

Although this is generally viewed with a jaundiced eye, this is not something China should take all the blame for since China is not the only country practicing this so-called 'resource aid'. Several Western countries and traditional donors participate in the resource race toward resource-rich countries. For one example, a country experiencing energy crisis similar to China is its neighboring country, Japan. From an early period, Japan struggled to solidify diplomatic relations with well-resourced countries to ensure their domestic energy security. Because of its critical energy crisis, Japan tries to focus its attention on resource-based aid, although being less explicit about it when compared to China. Several European countries also embarked on energy-oriented diplomacy, especially when the procurement of oil from the Middle East was frequently hampered by the region's political instability. Because of this unstable situation of energy import, African countries abound of petroleum, gold, and manganese have been the target of such resource diplomacy. Thus although resource diplomacy is generally criticized for its purposeful approach and would naturally hamper China's soft power, it is not a unique characteristic of China's aid that should take all the blame for.

Lastly, China's leaders have often addressed the close ties between the two regions in official meetings or summit meetings. A positive attitude towards a specific region or a country these days are strong and powerful enough to change the government or the publics' image toward a country. In line with this, President Hu Jintao has been very active in highlighting the bright and optimistic future of the China-Africa cooperation. In the 2006 Beijing Summit of the FOCAC, President Hu

expressed a plan for new “strategic partnership...based on a “win-win cooperation”.<sup>58</sup> These words from the leader of a country could soften the atmosphere and arrange a good foundation for enhancing the image of a country.

## **2. Soft Power in China’s Plan and Agenda**

A more specific plan and agenda of China’s aid policies could be seen from the actual agencies and institutions that carry out aid. For example, The Export-Import Bank of China mentions in its annual report that “with a total value of RMB 19.68 billion, some agreements will be of great significance for promoting Africa’s economic and social development.” It is further described that the Bank “will be able to provide more diversified services to expand and improve China-Africa cooperation on industrial capacity, infrastructure connectivity and finance.”<sup>59</sup> In this annual report, the phrase “mutually beneficial cooperation” is very much emphasized.

Due to this stance, China’s aid is mainly focused on infrastructure construction and industry development which could accelerate the development of the recipient countries mostly in terms of industrialization, rather than human development or capacity building. For instance, the Tanzania-Zambia Railway that China assisted in construction and post-construction management was an early effort of China to

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<sup>58</sup> “Address by Hu Jintao at the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation,” Beijing, China, November 4, 2006

<sup>59</sup> The Export-Import Bank of China, “The Export-Import Bank of China Annual Report 2015”, pg.53.

construct a cross-border infrastructure and further smooth the country's trade development.<sup>60</sup> That said, China might not be as active as traditional donors in education, training, and governance. However, focusing on economic development and building SOCs such as dams or factories might be more rational and effective for a country like China to smartly engage in fields that it has a comparative advantage in.

In terms of planning for which projects to take part in, China's method of evaluation poses a serious threat by thwarting its own soft power. According to Brautigam, China's standard of operating procedures for aid mainly focuses on how its aid can in turn serve China's own modernization and development. In fact it has reformed the evaluation method to additionally include "rigorous economic analysis to the feasibility studies"<sup>61</sup> before doing the project. This focus on how aid projects could economically benefit the donor country rather than the recipient country could lead to a result that positively acts for its own development but not for the recipient country. Lacking regard for what kind of projects will benefit the recipient country could lead to China losing trust and credibility from the recipient's side.

### **3. Soft Power in Aid Implementation**

The third part of the aid process is the aid implementation process. In this part, the actual process of implementing aid and soft power exerted during when the project

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<sup>60</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

<sup>61</sup> Brautigam, pg.55

or program is ongoing, will be explored. The reason why this part of the aid delivery process is especially important is because soft power is exercised by the choices you make and the actions you take, less by what you say and promise. On a similar note, Professor Lee Geun mentions that “possessing soft resources does not guarantee automatic conversion of the soft resources into soft power.”<sup>62</sup> This means that even if China holds plenty of know-how or commonalities with the recipient countries, this itself cannot be considered soft power, unless wielded and utilized in an appropriate way. How one uses soft power heavily defines whether the donor holds soft power or not in terms of the aid industry. Thus it is crucial to look at not what they ‘say they will do’ but rather at ‘what they actually did’ and ‘how they did it’.

In order to look at how China converted their resources to actual power, it is preferable to look at the aid conducting agency’s mid-term evaluation during the implementation stage. However, as mentioned earlier, it is realistically almost impossible to acquire a thorough report. Thus, this paper will refer to secondary data created by other scholars, though with some limitations, in order to indirectly explore what kind of soft power aspects or indicators could be found in China’s aid implementation stage toward Africa.

Some of China’s effort to exert soft power during the implementation stage of aid could be seen in its project where it builds “prestige” buildings. The intention

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<sup>62</sup> Lee, Geun. “A Soft Power Approach to the “Korean Wave””, *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 12, No.2 (June 2009), 134pg.

behind conference halls with names that include words like “Friendship”, grand government ministry buildings that show off the modernization of China’s construction skills, or stadiums that are named after the recipient country’s president are aimed for showing off its prestige as a developed country. These aspects show that China is not only concerned with reaping hard power benefits and profits, but also is keenly aware of how these huge projects could work as an effective tool to elevate its image in a positive way.

Furthermore, it is said that China rarely tried to force the local workers to manage or operate the aid projects in China’s own way. When setting up communes in African villages, they rarely made any effort to encourage communal production, which is the way it works in China domestically.<sup>63</sup> In an interview conducted by Brautigam, she mentions that local workers have confessed that the Chinese “spent almost no effort trying to convince people to adopt their model.”<sup>64</sup> However, China’s tendency to give money, engage in only the initial stage of aid projects, and then leave the scene without long term management has its own pros and cons. In one hand, this would act as a positive gesture for local workers and management groups to have leadership and ownership in their own projects and programs. On the other hand, there are serious sustainability problems stemming from China’s lack of long term care and attention toward the aid projects which lead to an inconclusive success of China’s aid

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<sup>63</sup> Brautigam, 2009, p.39.

<sup>64</sup> Brautigam, 2009, p.38.



projects.

#### **4. Soft Power in Aid Evaluation**

For the last stage of aid delivery, the evaluation process or the long-term effect of the donor's aid will be explored. Before going onto the actual evaluation, it is important to distinguish between the different terms used for evaluation: output, outcome, and impact. 'Output' usually refers to the mere products, goods, and services that are the short-term results of a project. Meanwhile, 'outcome' covers the effects that are slightly longer than outputs: it is the medium term effect of an aid's output. Lastly, 'impact' looks at the effect of aid for the longest term. It assesses the positive and negative long-term effects for both direct and indirect matters as well as intended and unintended influence which are long-lasting than outputs and outcomes.<sup>65</sup> Because soft power is about gradually building an image to attract and coopt, a longer term of a project's impact or outcomes are more crucial to see how the recipient country was changed and how they would view the donor country.

It is clear from looking at the organization chart of the EXIM Bank that there are units for evaluations. There is an "Evaluation Department" and an "Auditing Department" under the EXIM Bank's Department at Head Office. Also, some Chinese colleagues report of being commissioned to assess specific aid projects. However these

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<sup>65</sup> Degenbol-Martinussen, John and Poul Engberg-Pedersen, *Aid: Understanding International Development Cooperation* (London: Zed Books, 2003), ch.11, p.216-217.

reports are not publically available nor is it certain that China conducts an objective assessment since almost nothing is disclosed about project success rates or impact assessments.

Although the lack of information on Chinese aid makes it difficult to accurately monitor or evaluate the impact, we can assume the long term impacts indirectly by the comments of the recipient government or from other scholars' analysis of aid projects. One Zambian presidential candidate Michael Sata, mentioned that aid and investment from China were like 'Trojan horses'. He commented, "You recruit Chinese doctors and they end up having Chinese restaurants in town. They are just flooding the country with human beings instead of investment and the government is jumping...We are becoming poorer because they are getting our wealth."<sup>66</sup> His comment shows that not all aid projects of China received praise or admiration from the local government. Without continuous management and evaluation, these projects could instead hamper the donor country's soft power.

As a result of active engagement in Africa, more and more human resources are being transferred from China to the African continent. Due to the active encouragement of the Chinese government for Chinese firms to go global and upgrade the firms into competitive multinational corporations, an increasing number of Chinese companies are heading to Africa for more opportunities and an expanded market. Because these people who have moved to Africa sometimes stay in the country for good, Chinatowns

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<sup>66</sup> Chimangeni, Isabel. "Zambia: Is China Sneaking in Deals Through the Back Door?," *Inter Press Service* (Johannesburg), March 27, 2007.

around several African countries have been made and are expanding throughout the years. The effects of these Chinatowns need a long term perspective since these towns will not be disappearing soon and they would also affect the African society in certain ways. On one hand, these Chinatowns are a good tool for African people to familiarize with the Chinese culture, including their food, lifestyle, and people-to-people interaction which fills in the limitations of what governments can do. However, these Chinatowns have also been subject to high criticism from the local people for their reckless expansion and intruding the traditional culture of the local people. Some have blamed the Chinese government for sending Chinese workers to Africa, creating Chinatowns, and making them live there in order to create their own labor market in African countries.

## **5. Chinese Soft Power in Various Themes of Aid**

This part of the paper will categorize the various themes of Chinese aid that most likely is related to increasing China's soft power. By classifying the specific themes of aid, this paper tries to see in detail which aspects of the individual themes can contribute or devalue the soft power aspect of Chinese aid.

### **5-1. Education and Training**

China holds several training sessions and seminars for government officials or technical personnel and often invites these people to China in order to train them through academic education programs. The sessions cover topics such as trade

negotiations and management, diplomacy, economics, public administration, and non-governmental organizations.<sup>67</sup>

Cooperation on education, training and technical cooperation also occurs by China sending its experts of diverse fields to the African continent to conduct cooperation projects and transfer techniques in fields ranging from handcraft, clean energy, to cultural assets. For instance, China dispatched experts to Liberia to teach about 500 local people to weave bamboo and create products so that they could be sold in markets for actual profit.<sup>68</sup> China also held the ‘China-Africa University President Forum’ with UNESCO in October 2011, in order to discuss the future of Chinese and African universities and cooperation prospects.<sup>69</sup> In 2012 March, China cooperated with UNESCO for a ‘Funds-in-Trust for China-Africa Multilateral Education Cooperation’ to fund for basic education within African countries and increase their investment in education.<sup>70</sup> China’s soft power is effectively enhanced through these kinds of projects, since positive outcomes are directly transferred to the local people in forms of job creation, poverty reduction, and an increase in household income through capacity building.

China’s aid on elevating the education level of recipient countries could also be a

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<sup>67</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.9

<sup>68</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.9

<sup>69</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.16

<sup>70</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.16

good method for elevating its own soft power. China has constructed school buildings, provided teaching facilities, educated teachers, and supported foreign students to study in China by providing them government scholarships. In 2012, teachers from eight African countries received training through an educational trust fund under UNESCO that China set up and managed.<sup>71</sup> Also, it encouraged the development of vocational education and technical education so that developing countries could elevate their educational level, as well as maintain a balanced and equal education. This kind of aid that directly targets the local people can effectively display China's prominence as a potentially powerful partner country.

In order to improve the teaching and learning environment in Africa, China has focused on upgrading the building facilities of schools, colleges, libraries and provided computers, stationery, sports equipment for free. To allow various coverage of education through different methods, it also established distance education systems and online network systems, considering that some regions are not equipped with appropriate road facilities or transportation system for students to commute. Moreover, faculty members such as the principals, administrators, and teachers were trained for a better quality of education.

As mentioned earlier, China puts emphasis on vocational education and technical education. One example of such is the establishment of 'Friendship Vocational Training Center' in Omdurman, Sudan. China established this center to train local

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<sup>71</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.15

people. In 2012, the ‘African Talents Program’ was commenced, to train 30,000 personnel in diverse fields and offer 18,000 government scholarships.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, it sent more than 400 teachers to Ethiopia from the years 2001 to 2012 and trained more than 30,000 local teachers specializing in agricultural vocation and technical education. China also provided government scholarship for students in Africa to study in China. This engagement in education allows China to contribute to the development of human resource in the under-developed countries, which leads to a better image of China as a promoter of social and human development.

## 5-2. Agriculture

China’s Foreign Aid White Paper explicitly indicates that China is keen on developing countries’ development on agriculture. It also acknowledges that agricultural development is an essential industry for many developing countries’ reduction of poverty. Thus it provides developing countries with farm machinery, various grains, fertilizers and other materials related to boosting the agriculture productivity of the recipient countries.

The most notable activity regarding agricultural aid is its establishment of agriculture demonstration centers, in countries like Benin, Mozambique, Sudan, Liberia and East Timor. From 2010 to 2012, China established 14 agricultural

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<sup>72</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

technology centers in Africa.<sup>73</sup> These centers provided an opportunity to disseminate the high-quality and easily applicable technology of China's agricultural production to the local farmers. The center in Rwanda even expanded its target of training not only to local farmers but also to other social groups such as the women's organization, thus allowing a gateway for woman to participate in production. These centers are regarded as one of the most important platform of China's agriculture development aid and are also an effective way to enhance China's soft power. The local people could casually encounter Chinese technology and know-how, as well as Chinese people in these centers. Because agriculture is directly related to people's daily lives, it is especially an important strategy to focus on this industry. China's engagement to look after local farmers and even the minors of the society such as women is a good asset for improving its image toward the African people.

China also dispatches agricultural experts so that they could manage agriculture cooperation as well as consultation in the recipient countries. A group of expert team that was dispatched to Benin helped the country draft their Agricultural Law and Agricultural Administration Law. In Botswana and Guinea-Bissau, it assisted both countries to set up an agricultural development plan. For the team that went to Lesotho, Chinese expert teams helped the country apply free membership for World Health organization's FMD (Food-and-mouth disease). In Mauritania, the team helped construct a central lab where comprehensive analysis and testing of agriculture was

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<sup>73</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

possible.<sup>74</sup> As such, the dispatch of expert teams and senior staffs allowed China to customize their agriculture aid according to the situation and development levels of each country.

Not only did China send its own personnel to Africa, but also trained the local staffs in fields of agriculture technology and agriculture management. From forestry, animal husbandry, fishery, to methods of how to cultivate crops and even to national policy making, China provided training and research programs reflecting each country's demands and characteristics. Issues regarding poverty reduction, food security, and agricultural cooperation as well as technology dissemination and agricultural chain were dealt with for the local personnel's training.

China's efforts showed in improving people's living conditions in terms of water quality improvement. Because of its tough natural condition, sustainable and clean supply of water is especially important in Africa even for the development of its agriculture industry. China drilled 200 water wells in Togo and 38 wells in South Sudan. The water-supply project that China helped operate in Niger contributed to solving the water supply condition of the local people. However, because not much assessment was made regarding how these projects were conducted and the impacts of these projects, it is very hard to know how such effort proved to be in the end.

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<sup>74</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.4.



### 5-3. Governance

China assisted the establishment of ‘African Union Conference Center’ and the Office Complex in order to stimulate the unity and integration between countries within Africa.<sup>75</sup> However, other than efforts to facilitate the unity of African countries as a whole, China did not actively participate in aid regarding the reform of recipient government’s governance. Not much effort was shown in China’s attempts to improve government effectiveness or promote public institutions. Similarly, little effort was seen for China’s focus on political values and its promotion of its own political development model.

### 5-4. Health and Medical Assistance

China in various ways has been committed to improving the medical situation and health care conditions of the African countries. As of 2014, there were 43 medical teams from China in 42 African countries.<sup>76</sup> Also, China provided medicine and medical supplies, as well as constructed hospitals. For instance, the Tappita Hospital in Liberia which was assisted by China is currently operated jointly by China, Egypt and Liberia, and is currently in operation with quality medical equipment provided by China.<sup>77</sup> China also put effort to dispatch medical experts, train medical workers and

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<sup>75</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

<sup>76</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

<sup>77</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.12

conduct medical exchange or cooperation programs with the developing countries in order to raise their public health capacity.

China dispatches medical personnel to provide stations where the local people could receive medical services that they were not able to receive under their own medical systems due to lack of such skills or scarcity of adequate clinics and equipment for treatment. Some Chinese medical personnel group tour around the country in order to treat patients that could potentially be left out. China also would work closely with international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) to dispatch medical experts to Namibia, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, for example, to counter the spread of poliomyelitis.<sup>78</sup>

China approached medical aid first by constructing medical facilities and providing medical supplies for free. Medical facilities that China constructed include general hospitals, health centers, specialized clinics, and even traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) centers that alleviated the scarcity of Africa's medical and health facilities. China has also supplied technology-based medical supplies such as MRI scanners or maternal and infant monitors, as well as medicine for treating infectious disease like the cholera.<sup>79</sup>

The Sino-Zambia Friendship Hospital was one of China's aid projects under its new social responsibility plan. One spokesman for a Chinese company noted that they

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<sup>78</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.15

<sup>79</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.5

were supporting renovations of public recreation facilities including such hospitals.<sup>80</sup> Another project was the ‘Brightness Trip’, in which China held the initiative to treat eye-related diseases. In November 2010, the concerned team arrived in countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, and Sudan to conduct operation to more than 1,000 cataract patients.<sup>81</sup>

China’s soft power is also effectively delivered by the invitation of high-level officials or presidents of developing countries to the Chinese mainland. The Chinese government has occasionally invited ministers and gave a tour of major industrial sites as well as how China is keeping up with the ever-changing world in terms of information technology, agriculture, global education and medical services. For one instance, a senior health education officer in Sierra Leone mentioned that he was “moved by the technology” that people were utilizing in China and he later on encouraged Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Health to follow their example by using China’s traditional herbs and thus to produce medicine locally.

Chinese medical teams are also dispatched to the recipient countries to train local medical staff with the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases such as malaria and AIDS. These trainings were conducted in different methods ranging from demonstrations, lectures, to technical courses.<sup>82</sup> Even ordinary diseases such as

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<sup>80</sup> Tembo, “Social Responsibility Plan” quoted from Brautigam, 2009. p.6

<sup>81</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.6.

<sup>82</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.6

diabetes and rheumatism were some of the examples which China trained the local doctors to treat, which led to improving the health status and moreover the general life quality of people in developing countries where appropriate medical service is lacking. China's soft power in this case comes mostly from the transfer of China's unique medicinal features such as acupuncture application, massotherapy (treatment of disease by massaging), and medicines made in China.

Lastly, African countries received assistance for the management and prevention of infectious diseases from China. China, from 2010 to 2012 provided 60 batches of antimalarial medicine and influenza vaccines while conducting prevention education. In 2007, China and Comoros, a country in East Africa, cooperated on eradicating malaria. As this program has seen success by reducing malaria by 90% in the Comorian island of Moheli, China further cooperated to apply this program to the Comorian island of Anjoyan as well.<sup>83</sup> This spill-over effect of China's influence to neighboring countries will work beneficial for China to increase its name value within the region.

#### 5-5. Humanitarian Aid

Providing aid that tackles with humanitarian issues and the sanctity of life is particularly an important part of aid when aiming for soft power enhancement among the people of the recipient country. This is because human life and their dignity is a

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<sup>83</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.6.

fundamental value that is agreed upon by the international community regardless of each country's political or economic system. Thus, China provided relief material for the reconstruction of recipient countries that have encountered emergency situations or other humanitarian disasters. China also dispatched emergency relief teams and medical teams, as well as provided cash aid in order to make appropriate and timely responses of the demands of the international community. From the years 2010 to 2012, China has provided tents, blankets, emergency lights, food, medicine and water filters to countries that have been situated in natural disasters or crisis regarding human rights, such as Libya that had been torn with war.<sup>84</sup>

Africa is also struck by severe food crisis. From 2011 to 2012, the Sahel Region was devastated from the food shortage due to a serious drought.<sup>85</sup> In response to this, the Chinese government in 2011 provided RMB 440 million of emergency food aid to countries located in the Sahel Region, such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somali. Additionally, China also engaged in the post-disaster recovery. For instance in March of 2012, there were multiple explosions in the capital of Republic of Congo, Brazzaville. China assisted the rehabilitation of the displaced people and was involved in post-disaster reconstruction. More than 700 officials and technicians received the know-hows and experiences of dealing with China's own disasters and participated in

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<sup>84</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.7

<sup>85</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.7

various training programs.<sup>86</sup>

## 5-6. Culture

China sends young Chinese volunteers to help with aid projects as well as volunteer Chinese language teachers to teach its language to the local people. These volunteers while teaching language, also deliver physical education and art training, in order to foster a well-rounded development of the recipients.

Another aspect of effective enhancement of soft power is China assisting the construction of public cultural venues such as sports stadiums that the general public can enjoy. For instance, China funded the construction of Gabon's "Stade d' Angondje" which is a soccer stadium that held the 28<sup>th</sup> Africa Cup of Nations in 2012. Also, China constructed the Grand National Theater in Senegal, which is one of the largest theaters in Africa.<sup>87</sup> This aspect of China's aid effectively enhances China's soft power, through the methods of promoting 'culture' since these constructions encourage the cultural life of local residents and facilitate their recreational activity. Rather than engaging in small-scale cultural activities, China focused on building large scale prominent cultural venues, thus aiming to enhance their brand image not only to government officials but also to the local people.

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<sup>86</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.7

<sup>87</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.7

#### 5-7. Public Welfare

It is mentioned in the Chinese Foreign Aid White Paper that in order to improve the life quality of the citizens of developing countries and to organize public activities, China is engaging in constructing public welfare facilities both in rural and urban areas. It assisted the construction of affordable housing and places for various social activities. China's aid did not stop in simply aiding the construction itself, but also engaged in technical cooperation and how to manage these facilities. China also provided affordable residential housing that took into consideration the local people's living habits and the features of the surrounding environment.<sup>88</sup>

However in reality, there are not many reports or scholarly papers regarding China's efforts in providing affordable housing or arranging public activities for the people of recipient countries. Even if such programs were conducted, it is hard to say for sure that these programs were successful or contributed to influencing the mindsets of the recipient government and the people to the level that significantly changed their view toward China. Thus, soft power effects for this theme remain very ambiguous and uncertain.

#### 5-8. Improving Local People's Lives

There are many ways in which China utilized aid projects to improve the lives of the local people. The foremost example is China's assistance in various transport

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<sup>88</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.6

system projects in the recipient countries. Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania are now connected with a road network that was only possible by China's assistance in the third section of Sika Highway, which connects an economic hub Sika with Nairobi, Kenya's capital.<sup>89</sup>

China also distinguished itself by helping African countries increase their energy supply capacity. Hydropower stations, thermal power plants, and other energy projects were constructed. The Bui Hydropower Station in Ghana allowed the generation of hydroelectricity and farmland irrigation of the locals around the region. It also made possible fisheries development which also acted as a tourist spot.<sup>90</sup> These facilities not only contributed to Ghana's economic development, but also had a spillover effect to the surrounding countries. Senegal's power transmission, transformation and distribution grid that China assisted in the capital city Dakar, provided power to more than 150,000 residents, replacing the old grid that caused frequent blackouts.<sup>91</sup>

#### 5-9. Information Technology

China cooperated with African countries in developing an information technology based society. More specifically, China's White Paper on Foreign Aid specifies that China took part on projects related to information technology, such as

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<sup>89</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.8

<sup>90</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.8

<sup>91</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.8



establishing an e-government website, constructing optical cable networks and allowing more local people to easily access radio and television. The optical cable transmission network that China assisted in Cameroon and Tanzania effectively helped many countries in Africa to apply fiber cables around a wide district.<sup>92</sup> Being the number one country in the world for telephone, mobile phone and internet users domestically<sup>93</sup>, China's growing industry of information technology is now being applied to work positively for its foreign aid.

#### 5-10. Facilitating Multilateral Trade

China took part in facilitating the participation of developing countries in multilateral trading systems. China actively participated in WTO's 'Aid for Trade' initiative, donating 200,000 USD annually from 2008 to 2010 and 400,000 USD since 2011<sup>94</sup> in order to help least developed countries join the global trade. The donated sum set out to create the 'China Program for Assisting the Least Developed Countries' Accession to the WTO', holding occasional seminars and funding personnel to encourage the developing countries to attend important WTO meetings. More than 400 government officials of the developing countries from 2010 to 2012 have received such

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<sup>92</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.8

<sup>93</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook. 2017. Web. Accessed on 17 March 2017. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html>

<sup>94</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.10

assistance, while at the same time participating in seminars and sharing experiences with China's own case.<sup>95</sup>

Such facilitation for participating in international systems can partly counterbalance China's reluctance to abide by the OECD rules for foreign aid. It is true that the scholars and government officials in the Western world are showing concern to China's heavy influence in African countries. They often worry that African countries could gradually become more like China, disrupting the existing norms and becoming an outsider of the established international institutions. However, by showing that China's intention is not to encourage African countries to be a loner in the international society, China's soft power toward traditional donors could be in part offset by such gestures.

#### 5-11. Environment Protection

Whereas the issue of environment protection was not of much significance in the past, the international community has agreed upon the fact that caring the environment not only guarantees a better future for our future generation, but also solves many of the problems that people of the present day face. Along with this recognition, China set out to strengthen cooperation with African countries in this field, by putting emphasis in desertification prevention and developing new energy. China also has declared in several UN meetings that it will promise to boost assistance related to environment

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<sup>95</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.10

protection, such as emission reduction while sharing China's own experiences on preserving energy.

For instance, China provided the installation of solar streetlamps and solar power generators for developing countries to produce clean energy through renewable energy resources. From 2010 to 2012, countries such as Ethiopia and South Sudan received equipment and supplies related to environmental protection projects, such as wind and solar power generators or forest protection equipment. Based on its South-South Cooperation framework, China signed the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Complimentary Supplies for Addressing Climate Change' with 9 other developing countries that were easily affected by climate change. From this, China donated 500,000 energy-efficient lamps and 10,000 energy-efficient air conditioners to these countries.<sup>96</sup>

China did not stop in only providing hard materials such as materials and technology, but also carried out different capacity building programs or personnel training for developing countries regarding renewable energy. Ethiopia and Sudan are some of the countries that engaged in technical cooperation with China concerning the utilization of clean energy. Training sessions to government officials and technical personnel regarding issues such as resource management, ecological conservation and energy policies were carried out.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.11

<sup>97</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, p.11.

## **VIII. Evaluating China's Soft Power**

From looking at how and in what field China tries to approach the African continent in terms of their foreign assistance, we could test what kind of soft power China is trying to exert toward the recipient countries. The most noticeable feature is how much China is accentuating the similarity with Africa and identifying themselves as a perfect role model for African countries to follow. It would be less of a trouble for China to engage in Africa and enhance its soft power since China could sympathize easily by ostracizing the Western countries.

In spite of some exceptions, both China and Africa do not have positive memories or images regarding the global superpowers of the Western countries. For African countries, the past experiences of colonization and rigid aid policy heavily dependent on harsh Western standards have created a negative and hostile image towards the Western donors. Also, the basic notion of developing countries is that the international system is revolving around the already well-off countries and that the current system is designed for capital, wealth and resources to flow into the developed countries. For China, the Western bloc represented by the United States is often viewed as a deterrent of China's emergence as a global superpower and the main agent for spreading the 'China Threat Theory', which China is zealous in trying to get rid of. Both countries agree that the current power structure is on favorable terms to the Western countries and that such an imbalanced structure works to deter the advancement of the developing countries. Therefore, it is advantageous for China to use such similarities as a basis for the two region's cooperation and partnership.

Other than that, the two regions could get along fairly easily since both are developing countries that are not yet fully grown and important members of the South-South Cooperation. Both regions also share a long-standing history of friendly ties since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. China also is acknowledged by African governments as not being too bossy over aid projects as some Western countries are. For instance, when China and Guinea, a country in West Africa, agreed on China's offer of a loan, the two countries stipulated that Chinese advisers would live in a situation "not exceeding that of personnel of the same rank in the Republic of Guinea"<sup>98</sup>, an indirect but strong attack to Western donors for allowing their own personnel to live off the fat of the land.

## **1. Soft Power in Cultural Aspects of Chinese Aid**

When applying the framework in <Table 1> suggested above, an analysis of China's soft power can be divided into three parts. First of all, China's foreign aid to Africa does have a certain focus on culture, although this does not comprise a majority of its attention. Because China's aid is mainly focused on projects of extensive scale such as infrastructure construction or agriculture, attention on music, sports, art, or literature did not receive much spotlight. Even for projects and programs related to promotion of such culture, it was only to the extent of building sport centers and stadiums, which are somewhat indirect factors of promoting Chinese soft power in

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<sup>98</sup> "Communist Aid Contrasts: Guinea," Radio Free Europe, September 19, 1960, accessed online through the Open Society Archives: <http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/300/8/3/test/90-3-144.shtml> quoted from Brautigam, 2009. p.32

culture.

However, it seems that China has invested and assisted developing countries more in the fields of education and digital technology. As mentioned in chapter VII-5, China recognizes that education is a crucial part of the development of the recipient countries and highly engages in facilitating education. To some limited extent, China also promotes the education of its own language in the region, which could allow people in African countries to gain more interest to the country and further facilitate a smooth communication between Chinese and local workers. Through doing so, China can easily promote its image in a positive way not only to government officials in the education field, but also the local people who receive such education.

The digital field is also another aspect that China is slowly focusing its attention to. With its rapid development of domestic information technology, China actively assists African countries in the connectedness to the digital world and building up communications infrastructure. More and more people are getting access to the internet and this can set an optimistic platform for further promotion of China's technology and its communications equipment in Africa.

## **2. Soft Power in Political Values of Chinese Aid**

The political values part which consist the second pillar for the framework, mainly deals with whether China tried to enhance the governance of the country or tried to secure any political values during its aid. For this pillar of soft power, China's foreign aid does not have much prominence. China's attention on the public institutions

and the government remain mostly in managing and dealing with the outwardly features such as constructing huge buildings for such institutions and government agencies, rather than conducting aid on how to increase government effectiveness or supervising valid public policy. Moreover, because of its own policy to stay away from intervening in other countries' politics, China is receiving criticism from the rest of the world and their media that it is bypassing serious political ineffectiveness and corruption. For instance, Swann and McQuillen have mentioned that "Angola is avoiding pressure to clean up corruption thanks to aid from China."<sup>99</sup>

While it is true that China's uniqueness as a non-democracy attracted the attention of several African countries' leaders, not much effort were seen from China's side to implement such model of domestic government or social systems of such kind. It also seems tough for the Chinese government to explicitly transfer its own model of government or political systems to the African countries because of the criticisms it receives internationally, for its severe censorship, lack of transparency and lack of gateway for political participation.

Political values which are thought to be of grave importance such as individual freedom, human rights, and equality are the parts where China is receiving the most criticism of. This is understandable partly when looking at its domestic politics where individual freedom is often suppressed, while human rights is repressed especially

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<sup>99</sup> Christopher Swann and William McQuillen. "China to Surpass World Bank as Top Lender to Africa", Bloomberg.com, November 3, 2006.

when the country's ideology is threatened, and not much maturity or outwardly discussion is apparent on equality issues. China is even reprimanded by traditional donors for neglecting these values of the recipient countries in order to accomplish their own aid purpose. Thus in this part, China's reputation and soft power toward not only the recipient countries but also toward the international community face a gloomy prospect.

### **3. Soft Power in Foreign Policy of Chinese Aid**

Next, Nye's third pillar of soft power is 'foreign policy', which in this thesis will look at how much China engages with other countries with its diplomatic resources as well as whether China tries to tackle important issues that are deemed vital by the international community. It is also important in this part to see whether China collaborates with other countries rather than enforcing a unilateral attitude for foreign aid. China's 'One-China Policy' played a major role in its diplomacy, which enabled China to successfully engage with more countries in Africa by shutting off Taiwan's influence through its aid programs and projects.

In terms of environment protection, human development, health, and disaster relief, China's aid has been an active player of improving the situations of African countries. Although China's concern for the environment is not well-rounded, its interest in energy-efficient technology, clean energy and emission reduction could be a good starting point for its expansion on diverse issues of environment protection. Desertification, deforestation, and climate change are some of the vital issues African



countries are facing but which are not tackled by China in terms of environmental protection. These urgent issues of environmental problems could be also addressed in the future to diversify China's assistance in this field.

The sector of humanitarian assistance is where China can effectively assert its soft power as well. As mentioned above, China has sent relief materials and dispatched emergency relief teams for countries suffering from humanitarian and natural disasters. Medical teams were sent to take care of the victims and this could easily promote China's image as a responsible player of the international arena to make world a better place to live. Trying to help the people of recipient countries and especially those who are affected by natural and manmade disasters helps China improve its image toward both the developing countries as well as toward the international community in general. The only limitation to its approach in this case is that China does not give aid to disasters and incidents related to political disputes or ethnical conflicts which are almost the most frequently occurring in Africa. Because China keeps to its 'non-interventionist' policy, these disasters are often left untouched for Chinese teams.

China is also keen on improving the quality of people's lives in the recipient countries. Better water quality, establishing transport system, and facilitating public welfare can be an effective tool of using aid to promote its national brand and soft power level. These projects usually target a large number of local people and promote the collaboration with the government or related institutions of the recipient countries. By doing so, China can assert its intention of caring for people's live as well as, their consideration for the opinions of the local government while promoting its own

technology, goods, and experiences.

#### **4. Soft Power in the Enterprise Field of Chinese Aid**

The last section which is not covered by Nye's three pillars is the 'enterprise' field. Other than Nye, a lot of surveys or polls conducted on soft power include this aspect. This means that we cannot neglect the soft power that the enterprise or the commerce world creates. For this part, China's soft power is facing both positive as well as negative prospects. It is positive in that its economic model is an attractive example for many African countries to follow. Also, the fact that numerous Chinese entrepreneurs and companies are already active in the African continent could indirectly display the attractiveness of the country's business model. However, China lacks attention in raising the competitiveness of the local firms in the recipient countries or raising their capacity for innovation. This is partly because China cannot give up on the competitiveness of its own firms working in the recipient countries, trying to reap more benefits and send them back to China. In order to create an atmosphere where its own companies can prosper, the local firms of recipient countries could not be of main interest to China as a donor.

As a country that has seen rapid growth in the recent years, China's own experience of getting out of poverty and accelerating its development could be an excellent example for African countries striving to reach prosperity and to break the poverty cycle. Its experience can be transferred to the underdeveloped African countries, with an additional help of 'aid'. Its resources, whether they be technology or

any blueprint of economic development model could be a crucial asset and impetus for the African countries' modernization and prosperity.

The Beijing Model of development gives credibility to African partners who deem highly the know-hows and expertise that China utilized for its own economic development. China's model of prosperity is captured by not only the African government, but also the local people as an admirable model for national development. Its model is exceptionally a great milestone for African countries since China is a country who made the most progress over the past decades, not to mention its rapid economic development and reduction of poverty. Also, China's political system of non-democracy might have suggested an unconventional model to follow for African socialist countries. For instance, Tanzania willingly took in the experience of China's collective farming which was modeled on China's experience. They created their own socialist cooperatives, 'ujamaa villages' and hoped to follow China's path by allowing the government to transfer technology to these cooperatives and provide other services for further development.<sup>100</sup>

Its model is also attractive in that China's experience of development was relatively recent when compared to that of the Western countries which have been enjoying wealth since the last century or even Japan, one of the well-off countries in Asia that has risen more than decades ago. China's economic development model is also deemed as a preferable reference for under-developed African countries since

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<sup>100</sup> Brautigam, p.39

China achieved economic development without the need to democratize itself. On a similar note, it is even said among the ASEAN developing countries that their perceptions on China's political system are moving in China's favor. In other words, China's status as a non-democracy is no longer a hindrance for two countries to cooperate but rather that "the system has worked for China and that how China governs itself should not impede the two countries' relations."<sup>101</sup> This is a big depart from what the Western donors have insisted for long: that a country needs to democratize in order to see true and long-lasting economic development. China proved this wrong by maintaining a growth rate of 6-7 percent<sup>102</sup> and this would play a role of showing the developing countries how it was able to achieve such a high development even within the current global formation where there exist plenty of countries that already have dominated the global market.

## **5. Soft Power in General Features of Chinese Aid**

The last part of the soft power evaluation will look at not only within the framework, but also the general characteristics of Chinese aid to see how these features can enhance or hamper China's soft power. This analysis will also act as an important

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<sup>101</sup> Sun, Jing. *Japan and China as Charm Rivals: Soft Power in Regional Diplomacy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2012. p.81

<sup>102</sup> The World Bank, GDP Growth (annual %), 2017.  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=CN> Accessed on 6 May 2017.

aspect to look at, since image toward one country does not only rest in what it does and what it gives, but also in the general approach and stance of such country within the international donor community.

In the diplomatic sphere, China actually has seen a successful result of foreign aid since the last century. Many scholars point out that China's engagement to new countries in Africa allowed China to gain votes for its acquirement of a seat in the United Nations in 1971.<sup>103</sup> However, China's use of aid as a means of enforcing the 'One-China Policy' is closer to the hard power aspect of aid rather than soft power. Although the policy itself does not use any physical strength or hard resources, it could work as a pressure for underdeveloped countries to accept the policy in order to receive aid from China. If the recipient countries voluntarily engage with China rather than Taiwan by recognizing the potential of China and identifying with its government, this would be a result of the Chinese soft power. However, the existence of this policy could work as an exertion of hard power, especially for countries that desperately need the foreign aid and external assistance but could not receive it due to its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. These countries had to bite the bullet and comply with the 'One-China Policy'.

The 'One-China Policy' means that China only engages with those countries that have accepted such policy, and thus is engaging in diplomatic relationship with China, but not with Taiwan. In other words, those countries that are in official diplomatic

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<sup>103</sup> Brautigam, pg. 42

relationship with Taiwan cannot be a partner of China's diplomacy, nor can they be qualified as a recipient of China's foreign aid. Some Western donors condemn this pattern of aid by mentioning that this is not a true aid and rather, a coercion to control the developing countries. However, China stands against them by arguing that it is completely rational for aid to be used as a political strategy and as a tool to improve diplomatic relations with other countries.

China has been active in offering zero tariffs for taxable items from the least developed countries in Africa. In order to effectively boost export towards China, items on about 190 categories have enjoyed zero tariff in 2005.<sup>104</sup> According to China's White Paper on Foreign Aid, commodities in about 5,000 categories that were exported from the least developed countries to China were not given any tariff. Also, it was revealed that China was one of the largest markets for the export items of the least developed countries from 2008 to 2012.<sup>105</sup> However, Hu Jintao announced in November of 2011, the intention to offer zero tariff treatment for taxable items was only applied to those countries that have agreed to diplomatically engage with China.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.10

<sup>105</sup> China's Foreign Aid White Paper, 2014, pg.10

<sup>106</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 《中国的对外援助(2014)》白皮书 (英文, 2014, Web. [http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2014/Document/1375014/1375014\\_2.htm](http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2014/Document/1375014/1375014_2.htm) Accessed in 6 May 2017.

This preference for countries obediently adjusting to China's political intention often received international criticism. The criticism was mainly due to China's failure to look out for general values of the international community of poverty reduction since a widely recognized standard for traditional donors was to favor the least developed countries rather than countries that best suits the donor's benefit. Although China's attention to developing countries and its tariff redemption is considered to be a considerate policy for a better world, its standards for selecting the countries is often causing its soft power to backlash. Thus this political aspect of China's aid shows the ambiguous approach of China between its hard power and soft power in terms of delivering aid.

Because of China's aid practice of sticking to tied aid, a lot of Chinese commodities reach the African domestic market. There are positive sides to this such as the consumer enjoying a wider variety of goods to choose from. Also, this is an efficient way of promoting China's brand image, service level, as well as its culture. Moreover, China's soft power could be promoted by emphasizing "equality and mutual benefit" through tied-aid since China could effectively deliver the message that aid is a partnership between two countries on an equal basis, rather than a unilateral policy based on charity.

However, the local manufacturing industry would be hit hard by Chinese commodities or services sold at a much lower price rate than its local goods or services. The Chief of the Central Bank of Nigeria used the word 'colonization' in his article in

<Financial Times> to criticize the heavy involvement of China in African nations.<sup>107</sup> He argued that China's actions are not much different from what the West did to them few decades ago. Thus, although China and Africa could both somehow benefit from commercial engagement of Chinese services and commodities, their efforts to enhance soft power could be deemed as an unintentional neocolonialism under the disguise of 'soft power'.

Next, China's intention to emphasize SOCs and infrastructure rather than the humanitarian side of aid such as health, education, and human resources development, could hamper China's soft power. This is because SOCs and infrastructure building shows a high level of tied aid when compared to humanitarian aid which uses less physical resources and more of 'soft resources' that professor Lee Geun mentioned. China prefers huge projects that require big budgets and physical resources because they in turn, bring short-term and large profit back to China. These aid practices are less effective for enhancing its soft power, which rather depends on a long-term time period and have more to do with human development and softer values.

China's soft power in terms of aid is often stunted by its vague distinction between aid and commercial investment. Along with their Go-Out Policy (or Go Global Policy), since the late 1990s, the government promoted overseas investment. Even if aid and overseas investment had been distinguished, it is in fact true that

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<sup>107</sup> Sanusi, Lamido. "Africa must get real about Chinese ties." Financial Times, 12 March 2013. Web. <https://www.ft.com/content/562692b0-898c-11e2-ad3f-00144feabdc0> Accessed in 22 April 2017.



China's aid itself is heavily associated with trade while the traditional donor countries try hard to disregard and lessen the trade or commerce aspect from their aid delivery. Based on the 'Angola Model', China's aid is pivoted toward financial infrastructure while explicitly mentioning that these projects should contribute to supporting Chinese firms and furthering its own trade. It is also true that projects like factory building or agriculture programs that China assisted as part of its aid program, failed later on and were revitalized years later in the form of joint venture investment.

However, according to some scholars like Deborah Brautigam, China's aid is not as threatening or completely against the efforts of the traditional donors. She mentions "their [China's] aid program is certainly large and growing but not enormous. They are undoubtedly interested in gaining access to Africa's natural resources but there is little evidence that aid is offered exclusively, or even primarily, for that purpose".<sup>108</sup> She also goes on to explain that it does not seem to make the governance of African countries worse, and the tied aid characteristics of their aid is not unique; most countries try to make their economic engagement with some strings attached, simply not as too explicit as the Chinese do.<sup>109</sup>

Some say that China's tied aid is inevitably a measure to promote Chinese business and will thus hamper the soft power of China. In fact, the international community as well as African recipients often rebukes this pattern of aid. However, it

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<sup>108</sup> Brautigam, 2009, p.21

<sup>109</sup> Brautigam, 2009, p.297

is true that some Western donors apply a similar practice of tied aid and Japan is often suspected for similar actions. Paul Harris claims that environmental aid by Japan that used to be praised by OECD and World Bank as an exemplary model of contributing tremendously to secure biodiversity and tackling with climate change was “in large measure to promote Japanese business.”<sup>110</sup>

It is also true that compared to the past, China has steadily but gradually increased the portion of its aid toward technical cooperation and human resources when compared to huge infrastructure projects or materials that allow it to reap direct benefits. The Foreign Aid White Paper of China mentions that it has directed more aid to low-income developing countries in order to “promote the realization of Millennium Development Goals”<sup>111</sup>, which is a set of international development goals established by the United Nations. Upholding and emphasizing these international goals can promote China’s soft power within the aid industry. Also, China’s engagement in improving infrastructure is said to have an effect of cutting down costs owing to its low-cost equipment and materials, while allowing high quality projects, which shows that there still are positive aspects to China’s focus on infrastructure and industry.

What’s more, some say that its focus on infrastructure and industry unlike the Western countries could rather act as a factor that adjusts the balance of traditional

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<sup>110</sup> Hall, D. “Japanese Lessons and Transnational Forces: ODA and the Environment”, in D. Leheny and K. Warren (eds) *Japanese Aid and the construction of global development*, London: Routledge, pp.167-85 quoted from Heng, Yee-Kuang. “Beyond ‘kawaii’ pop culture: Japan’s normative soft power as global trouble-shooter”, *The Pacific Review*, Vol 27, No.2, 2014, 186pg.

<sup>111</sup> China’s Foreign Aid White Paper (2014), p.1

donor's huge concentration of aid on human development. According to Ayodele and Sotola, "Chinese firms are willing to invest where western companies are unwilling. Western investors and aid agencies are unwilling to invest in areas such as: physical infrastructure, industry and agriculture...areas that are crucial to Africa's development."<sup>112</sup> This paper also takes the example of China and Nigeria signing an oil sale agreement in 2005 and mentions that these risky ventures are mostly conducted by China, rather than Western donors who try to avoid money-losing projects and would not stake investment on unstable countries or regions. From these aspects, we could see that focusing particularly on constructing infrastructure and big-scaled projects might not be such a hindrance for China's soft power. African countries seem to appreciate the fact that China is filling up the lack of investment that the West have left for no other donors to cover up.

Lastly, China needs to focus on the entire process of its aid to increase its soft power as a responsible donor. China's planning and implementation stage of aid does not seem to differ completely from the Western donors, but the post-project stage lacks adequate assessment and evaluating work. China should focus on the evaluation and assessment process of their aid, rather than simply pouring resources for implementing aid. Without assessing the long-term impact, China's efforts to further its reputation among the aid industry would see hurdles in the near future, with problems arising

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<sup>112</sup> Ayodele, Thompson and Olusegun Sotola. "China in Africa: An Evaluation of Chinese Investment". *Initiative for Public Policy Analysis (IPPA)* 2014. p.2, p.9

even to this date. Projects easily collapse after being handed over to the recipient country, which further accentuates the importance of post-evaluation process and consistent care for effective aid. Moreover, because an additional evaluation process is such a huge burden to recipient countries, they are usually reluctant to carry out evaluations of what they have received. Although time-consuming and costly, China should come forward to actively encourage recipient countries to participate in the process of evaluating its aid project or program. This is an imperative process if China wishes to check aid from the recipient's side and improve its aid projects so that it could tactfully benefit both sides.

## **IX. Ambiguities of Soft Power**

Deborah Brautigam mentions at the very last sentence of her book, that Chinese aid is “the dragon’s [China’s] ultimate, ambiguous gift.”<sup>113</sup> China’s aid is covered in a lot of puzzle and ambiguity when compared to other donors, mostly due to their tendency not to reveal any official report of its aid practices. However, this may not be an inherent feature of Chinese aid. The aid industry itself might be very ambiguous when it comes to enhancing soft power. Following are the five aspects of aid that could render itself ineffective regarding an ambiguous soft power improvement.

First, foreign assistance intended to enhance soft power can rather result in undermining a donor’s soft power. In other words, the act of assisting and investing in a recipient country does not at all times directly lead to enhancing the donor country’s soft power. Projects that were planned well with plenty of resources and preparation could encounter countless unexpected problems, especially after they are fully handed over to the recipient countries. What matters more here are how a country manages the aid project and what kind of aspects of focus the donor country considers in delivering aid. China is often blamed for pouring in a lot of resources but not taking into account the local people’s inherent culture and situation, thus not equipped with how to compensate the local people who suffer from damages in their hometown or job. Thus the strategy to enhance soft power by allocating more money and giving a hand can become a double-edged sword when unilaterally trying to affect the people, without

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<sup>113</sup> Brautigam, 2009, p.312

considering the possible situational change people could undergo.

Furthermore, efforts to enhance soft power towards one country could automatically hamper one's soft power towards the others. Taking China's case into account, its effort in attracting African countries could hamper its own soft power toward the Western donor countries and the rest of the international community. For instance, China's 'non-intervention principle' deters China from interfering with Sudan's Darfur Conflict where there was gross human rights violation. From the Sudanese government's point of view, China is a comfortable and a preferable donor since China assists the development of Sudan without meddling with political affairs like other Western donors. In this case, China's soft power towards Sudan could increase. However, by neglecting such grave issue China received a lot of international criticism, which led to China losing soft power from other countries, mostly Western countries that value human rights and political stability. The limitation of soft power is that if only a win-win relationship is possible between the supplier and the receiver, it will tend to continue regardless of any international blame from a third party.

Next, countries referring to enhancing soft power may be exerting hard power in real life when delivering aid. This is because countries use the concept according to their own preferences of foreign aid, aligning the term with their own strategies. Soft power, when yielded not by individuals but by states, could easily be an extension of hard power and merely depends on which part of the action the state tries to direct the audience's attention to. In other words, soft power could be used as an 'implied threat' in which it is misused just to create a 'softer' background for a more effective use of

hard power. This can be seen in China's case of asserting its 'One-China Policy', which is often depicted as its soft power, but is frequently used as a strong requirement for engaging with China.

The third aspect of soft power's ambiguity is that gains from soft power are often incidental or uneven. The biggest discrepancy comes between the recipient government level and the citizen, or public level. The recipient government usually decides the bigger picture of aid and gets involved in the aid receiving process. It is also the government officials that keep track of which donor countries transfer how much amount of money or how much a country is engaged in the development process of the recipient country. The dilemma caused from this is that public opinion toward a specific country is usually formed by the citizens, less by the government officials. Thus, public opinion, which plays a major role in forming the image and soft power of the country in consideration, is not as affected by the aid distribution system, as it would affect the high-level officials and leaders within the government. Even if the aid itself is designed to be transferred to affect a wide range of the local people who consist the 'public', local people might not be well-informed on which country was behind all the assistance. Thus, in terms of soft power enhancement, this kind of aid delivery process where the donor country is not apparent would be inefficient from the donor's point of view.

The discrepancy between the opinions of the government or leader and the local people is starkly represented in Zambia's case. In Zambia, there was an incident where the local people who were affected by China's indiscriminate engagement protested

toward a Chinese firm that was in charge of an aid project. Following this uprising, then president Levy Mwanawasa commented, “The Chinese government has brought a lot of development to this country and these are the people you are demonstrating against?” He also went on to say, “You people of Chambishi should know better. This mine here was run by a South Africa company which failed. The Chinese came and you have seen what is happening.”<sup>114</sup> This anecdote shows us how the perception of the government and the local people could differ towards one country, even without the donor’s intention to do so.

Also, following Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to attend the Zambia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone in 2007, there were several visible demonstrations expressing animosity toward China’s involvement. Dr. Mwansa, the Minister of Mines once criticized the local people of Chambishi for their militant stance against the Chinese and emphasized that this cooperation would lead Zambia to develop further into industrialization. His comment must have put premium on President Hu’s promise that China would invest at least \$800 million in the economic zone and thus create a lot of job spots for the local people.<sup>115</sup> These examples demonstrate that what the government thinks of a country and what the local people think of a country could be completely different.

Notwithstanding these complexities of aid, effort to attract local people in Africa

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<sup>114</sup> Brautigam, p.6

<sup>115</sup> Brautigam, p.6



is less of a priority for China, because of the African governments' low level of transparency and lack of citizen participation in politics. Public opinion usually plays a major role in the politics of the modern world. However for the majority of the African countries, state acts according to the government or a single leader's will due to a limited path or restricted gateway for the public's opinion to pass through to influence the decision of the whole state. In a sense, China could make good use of this situation and focus only on building good relationships with the government and high-level elite officials within the African countries' government, rather than the public as a whole since they have little to say in the political sphere. In other words, this could be a convenient situation for China in which they only have to please the several elites of the whole country rather than live up to the general public so as to enhance its soft power.

The fourth ambiguity of soft power within the aid industry is the time horizon problem. Because soft power enhancement through aid is carried out by donor countries trying to build a good image towards the recipient countries, it requires a constant effort and a long-term process to consolidate a positive image. However, the donor country's main target region for aid is prone to change based on the constantly-changing international politics and relationship between countries. This is less of a case for traditional donors who have built solid relationship with their recipient countries for a long period of time, but could be a plausible situation for countries like China whose history of aid is relatively short and whose relationship with recipient countries is easily changing according to the country's political stance regarding Taiwan or Tibet.

Thus rather than targeting for soft power enhancement, this kind of attitude in aid can easily become a hard power element, targeting short-term benefits and forcing countries to sever ties with Taiwan in order to receive assistance. Without a consistent and wide-prospected engagement for assistance, it could result in a serious blowback of soft power. Also, these side-effects of arbitrarily choosing the recipient countries are the evidence of the fact that aid delivery and the implementation process of the donor countries are usually not reciprocal, but unilateral.

Lastly, the donor country's soft power exertion is highly dependent upon the capacity and the attitude of the local government. Because aid is not solely conducted by the donor country, but often in collaboration with the recipient government, NGOs, and other stakeholders, it is difficult for donor countries to carry out aid exactly as planned. A perfectly planned-out aid project could be hindered easily by domestic affairs or unexpected national crisis. In 1979, two years after China left the scene, a serious problem was reported in Sierra Leone's method of managing ten farms that were originally run by the Chinese aid. Its chief agriculturalist commented, "these farms are currently flourishing with weeds."<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, Deborah Brautigam experienced for herself that in Gambia, thanks to the democratically elected government, farmers were successfully maintaining the growth of "Chinese faro [rice]". She comments that the government which is based on a strong support for rural areas

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<sup>116</sup> "Minutes of Meeting at Tower Hill," Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chinese Project Files, Tower Hill, Freetown, January 3, 1979, quoted from Brautigam, 2009, p.238.

allowed a more effective agriculture even after the Chinese have actually left the aid scene.<sup>117</sup> All in all, these anecdotes show how the success of an aid project could be highly dependent upon the recipient government's attention and care.

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<sup>117</sup> Brautigam, p.239

## **X. The Pros and Cons of a Hybrid Power for China**

As mentioned earlier, China is utilizing both hard power and soft power for foreign assistance to African countries, thus actively taking advantage of this ‘hybrid power’. It is interesting in that this kind of behavior is in contrast with traditional Western donors that officially try to conceal the harder aspect of power and promote the soft power feature in carrying out aid. The following paragraph will be dedicated to explaining why China is explicitly utilizing both hard and soft power in aid and how it is able to do so without being self-conscious of its behaviors.

First of all, China is not constrained by any international institutions when it comes to aid. Meanwhile, Western donors are highly restrained to conform to specific rules and standards that are set by OECD-DAC. The official definition of ODA demarcated by OECD requires that aid be “provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies.”<sup>118</sup> Contrarily for China, because its state system is still supporting socialism, the so-called private sector is actually in large part under the control of the state and most of the companies operating in the aid scene are state-owned. Thus although a Chinese firm is actively carrying out aid, this could satisfy as foreign aid in the eye of the Chinese government.

In addition, OECD-DAC donors have to keep to the definition that an assistance is only qualified as ODA when it “is administered with the promotion of the economic

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<sup>118</sup> OECD. Official development assistance-definition and coverage, 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm> , Accessed 7 May, 2017.

development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective.” For China in contrast, engagement that does not necessarily put the recipient country’s development at the top priority can easily qualify as aid. Although the ‘main objective’ is not a quantitative or a testable term, we could see several projects that China carries out mostly to benefit itself by making huge profits or participating in investments. Because these big-scale projects can somehow contribute to the recipient country’s developing process, any activity that somehow improves the status of an African country could be categorized as aid for China. This is how China can easily assert its hard power of economic profit while carrying aid at the same time.

Other important aspects of what qualifies as aid in OECD-DAC is that aid should be “concessional in character and convey a grant of at least 25 percent and a discount rate of 10 percent.”<sup>119</sup> Also, DAC has a detailed ODA reporting rule to ensure how much countries follow by the set of definition and make sure that there is consistency among the donors. Their Creditor Reporting System (CRS) requires donor countries to report in detail their ODA activities including the sector, channel, flow type, and amount of aid.<sup>120</sup> However, China is not constrained by these kinds of regulations and thus is relatively free of defining its own concept of aid, as well as not

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<sup>119</sup> OECD. Official development assistance-definition and coverage, 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm> , Accessed 7 May, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> OECD. Stat. Creditor Reporting System. Web. Accessed in 12 May 2016. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>

having the burden to report on a regular basis how much they gave to which country. This kind of autonomy and relative freedom to determine and carry out its own aid is beneficial for China to consider both its own benefits and the recipient country's development at the same time.

Secondly, China is currently trying to set a new paradigm, mainly summarized by the "Beijing Consensus". This is a big depart from the original paradigm that has nearly dominated the international arena, the Washington Consensus, based on the ideas advocated by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. It was almost an unwritten law and a consensus among the traditional donors that the American market economy system should be the model for developing countries. However, China emerged in this scene, upholding a win-win relationship and a reciprocal benefit from aid delivery, while bringing its own set of rules to the developing countries. By doing so, China does not have to follow a determined set of rules and it could also proudly show off its status as an emerging global leader who is a 'setter' and 'creator' rather than a 'follower' of rules determining the aid industry. A successful establishment and settlement of a new paradigm led by China will allow it to emerge as a new leader of the international society.

Lastly, China is sticking to tied aid and is being very careful about revealing the detailed statistics of its aid due to its domestic poverty and high inequality levels. It is said that the Chinese government has received huge criticism from their own people for disregarding the poor people living in China, suffering from severe poverty. Outside the shining cities of Beijing and Shanghai that seem to have reached a level of

glory and splendor that equals any developed countries' metropolitan area, the country in its rural inland area still suffers from deep poverty. This partially prevents China to set aside large amount of foreign aid to pour just by mere altruism or paternalism to other countries. To evade the domestic criticism that it is giving too much to other countries while ignoring the destitute situation within its borders, China could not follow the existing rules, but create new ones to carry out aid while avoiding criticism from within. Thus the domestic poverty is also one of the reasons why China is cautious about disclosing the exact amount of aid and thus, approaching aid with some hard power aspects.

By sticking to its own set of rules and self-regulated policies of aid, China could adjust the traditional rules of the Western donors, so that it gains as much from aid as would the recipient countries would. Aid will also become an effective tool for a country like China that has plenty of resources and capital but who lacks allies that advocate its political and diplomatic legitimacy. China will start to use what it has most, to cover up for what it lacks most. However, during this process, China cannot get away from being compared to traditional Western donors whose aid is practiced in a 'softer' way. Having hard power elements in its aid might turn against China and hamper its soft power towards the recipient countries as well as the rest of the world. Thus this hybrid power system of aid which holds plenty of hard power elements has both pros and cons in which China will have to consider and measure in the future for a systematic and smart approach to aid.

## **XI. Conclusion**

### **1. Conclusion**

There are two aspects of ambiguity in analyzing soft power. First, soft power is a theoretically ambiguous term. Not much conceptualization has been made and thus there are plenty of situations and conditions in the field of delivering aid that looks as if soft power was promoted but actually it contained hard power factors or when soft power was rather hampered regardless of a friendly gesture. This vague theoretical framework for soft power was partly able to overcome starting with Joseph Nye's three pillars of soft power: culture, political values, and foreign policy. On top of this existing framework, this paper tried to combine other indicators to build a detailed version of how the concept could be applied to different fields for further analysis of aid.

Next, the ambiguity also lies in the empirical aspect, where intentions to promote soft power could lead to backlashes. China's heavy engagement in African countries mostly increased its recognition and national image, but this practical aspect also shows uncertainty as mentioned above from cases where China's true intention did not carry itself to the recipients as it wanted to. China's action carried out of good will to engage positively with African countries also often received criticism from other donors or the international community, which then acted negatively towards China's soft power.

It is hard to accurately predict the future of China's aid and its soft power. This is



partly because a huge proportion of soft power enhancement could be very much dependent upon the country's economic power and other external factors. However, from looking at its rapid growth rate that still sustains itself to date, China as a rising country could increase its future appeal toward the developing countries. As China is gradually opening up and its economic reformation is being realized, China's non-democracy might not be a huge problem for these recipient countries to follow. What's more, a majority of the developing countries are still maintaining an authoritarian regime in the state level and this would allow them to think of the China Model as more attractive and approachable, since the leaders as well as the government would most likely try to sustain the regime. In this case, leaders of Africa would find it plausible and effective to get into closer economic and political relation with China, in order to follow this alternative path of economic prosperity. China's development is often summarized as the 'developmental state', which involves a top-down process of government engagement. This would be an appealing guidance for countries with a powerful government that wishes to follow a similar path in terms of development.

Moreover, as China gradually opens up its country, new domestic pressure for corporate social responsibility as well as environmental and social protections will grow inside China.<sup>121</sup> We never know if this will lead China to go after a similar path with the mainstream OECD-DAC donors, but concerns about its disregard for labor rights or indiscreet engagement in reaping profits will be hopefully reformed. This will

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<sup>121</sup> Brautigam, 2009. p.39

in the end lead to China following a reasonable and righteous path of aid, if not exactly following the path of donors from liberal market democracy.

Beijing Consensus is receiving praise and agreement from various third world countries. This could later on create a network of countries that favor China, enhancing China's soft power. However, at the same time, a network of recipient countries that have been negatively affected by China's aid could also be created, which the country should look out for in the future. China's efforts to dispel Sinophobia and the common conception that its rise is a threat will become more proactive as the Western powerhouses continue to raise concern on its increasing global leadership. China will continuously keep up with shaping the world where its influence is stronger compared to the past when the hegemony was all up to the U.S.

## **2. Limitations and Recommendation for Further Research**

The main limitation that studies regarding soft power face is the uncertain definition of the term, 'soft power'. As mentioned earlier, a process of conceptualizing the term is necessary in order to utilize and apply this term to other fields of social science. Without any specific indicators of what consists of soft power, a thorough and persuading research regarding soft power would be impossible. Although with some limitations, this paper hopes to encourage further research on specifying indicators that contribute to enhancing or hampering soft power and applying these indicators to the real world of aid.

There are methodological challenges in gathering data regarding the impact of

aid. This is one of the reasons why not much assessment has been made regarding the long-term effect of aid. More study needs to be done on assessing and measuring the impact of aid by looking at detailed case studies and in-depth interviews with government officials and local people who were affected by specific aid projects. Until now, there were several short-term and project-centered engagements, but not a lot of researches on long-term changes and impacts. Specific indicators of whether aid has actually increased welfare or enhanced growth in the developing countries are required. For policy-makers of donor countries, it would be especially useful if surveys and polls are conducted on whether perception toward the donor country has changed due to aid. This would allow policy-makers to consistently check whether their country's aid is going in the right direction as planned and which aspects they have to reconsider to improve aid as well as when planning for future projects.

Also, it is practically impossible to single out the independent variable in terms of a country's development since even if a donor's effort could contribute to a successful development, scholars cannot be certain about how much impact was contributed by the local government's policies, the residents' effort to overcome poverty, or the effective design of the donor countries to carry out aid. Thus, a detailed research on trying to evaluate the true impact of an aid project would be a valuable attempt in the future academia. Direct influences and indirect impacts are hard to distinguish for any social phenomenon, but detailed survey to recipients by using control factors could partially overcome these difficulties.

Moreover, the current reality is that impacts and results of certain aid projects

can only be seen from evaluations that donor countries conduct themselves. However, in order to overemphasize their success, donor countries often exaggerate their contribution or the positive impact of their aid. To guarantee the objective perspective of evaluation, both the donor country as well as the recipient country, or possibly a third party, should participate in evaluating the macro and micro impacts of aid. Overcoming donor-driven assessments and encouraging a reciprocal evaluation in the overall performance of a project both by the donor and the recipient's side is necessary for a desirable development of aid.

### **3. Implications for South Korea's ODA**

As shown from China's efforts to improve its image through foreign aid, South Korea is also in an urgent need of ODA that utilizes what South Korea could specialize in or that could somehow benefit South Korea's country image. It is in desperate need to develop a unique lesson that it could provide that distinguishes itself from other developed countries. South Korea's ODA is currently showing its limitation not only in its total amount per GDP but more so in its approach, method and content. The amazingly rapid speed of modernization and democratization as well as being the first country to change its stance from a recipient country to a donor country in terms of foreign aid are the two aspects of South Korea's soft power that a lot of the developing countries envy and try to follow. Thus South Korea should not stop in the mere fact of distributing aid and increasing the volume, but should begin by contemplating how ODA could enhance a country's soft power and image as well as help display itself as a

meaningful member of the international donor society. A serious consideration on how South Korea's economic and political development path could be transferred to the different circumstances of each and every developing country is necessary for a successful and effective ODA policy.

Also, as a middle power country that relatively lacks hard power, South Korea holds a lot of highly educated and highly skillful human resources when compared to the lack of hard resources it holds. By using such advantages, Korea could tactfully conduct its own way of aid distribution. This would allow the country to diplomatically engage in other countries in a smarter way, regardless of the smaller scale of its aid volume when compared to Western donors. Geun Lee in his article also mentioned that "the application of soft resources to produce soft power depends more on the intellectual and creative capacity of a given country, rather than upon its physical capacity."<sup>122</sup> This gives hope for middle power countries like South Korea to utilize soft power in an effective way and make a breakthrough for winning recognition in the international society.

Thus it is a clever idea for a middle power country to look for a way out by using soft power, when it is too difficult to exert hard power in its geopolitical situation where major superpowers are surrounding it. The soft power strategy, as seen from China's aid to Africa, would be a crucial tool for Korea to play a larger role in the international sphere through foreign aid.

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<sup>122</sup> Lee, "A Theory of Soft Power and Korea's Soft Power Strategy", 2009, p.215

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## 요약(국문초록)

아프리카는 주요 공여국들의 경쟁의 장으로서 지정학적으로 매우 복잡한 지역이다. 최근 ‘소프트파워’ 전략이 중요해짐에 따라, 많은 국가들은 소프트파워 전략의 일환으로 대외원조를 활용하여, 자국의 이미지를 향상시키고 상호 협력을 위한 기반을 다지려고 노력하고 있다. 그 중에서도 중국은 지역내의 입지와 소프트파워를 강화하기 위해 아프리카 국가들과의 협력을 더욱 더 강화해 나가고 있다. 그러나 소프트파워라는 개념은 피상적이고 모호하며 흔히 정부와 정치인들로 인해 남용되는 경우가 많다. 중국의 대외원조를 면밀히 살펴보면 그들이 목표로 삼는 것이 소프트파워 향상인지, 또는 하드파워로 분류해야 하는 것인지에 대해 의문을 제기하게 된다.

이 글은, 개발 원조의 하드파워적 요소를 최대한 드러내지 않으려는 기존의 공여국들과는 달리, 중국의 원조는 하드파워와 소프트파워의 요소를 혼합한 유형의 원조를 하고 있다고 주장한다. 소프트파워의 내재적 모호성으로 인해 중국은 불확실하고 불완전한 원조를 펼칠 수밖에 없으며, 이는 수혜국에게는 오히려 하드파워의 요소로 비춰질 수 있다. 따라서 이 글은 중국의 아프리카에 대한 원조가 어떠한 소프트파워적 요소를 가지고 있으며, 이는 실제로 소프트파워로서 수혜국들에게 작용을 했는지, 하드파워의 요소는 없었는지에 대해 연구를 한다. 또한 이런 혼합적인

전략을 채택함으로써 중국이 얻게 되는 이점과 중국 원조의 도전 과제들에 대해 살펴보고자 한다.

주요어: 소프트파워, 개발원조, 중국 원조, 아프리카, 하드파워, 공적개발원조

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